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AN

ESSAY

ON THE

DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH,

AND ON THE

SOURCES OF TAXATION.

PART I.—RENT.

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BY THE

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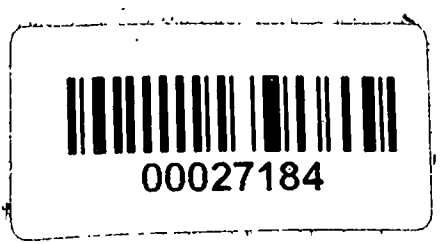

PREFACE.

THE causes of the varying wealth and poverty of nations have naturally at all times attracted the eager attention of mankind. For a long time, however, it was thought that there was nothing in the subject very difficult to understand: that the only way for a people to get rich was to procure money or bullion, and that the only way to get poor was to part with them. The art of enriching nations obviously consisted, therefore, in devising the means, first, of getting possession of as much of the precious metals as possible, and then, of holding them fast so as to keep the heap ever growing.

It is in the different measures, or rather systems of measures, successively adopted to effect these purposes, that we must trace the rude but very decided political economy of the ages which elapsed between the conquest of England and the middle of the last century.

For some time, however, before this later period there may be discerned, meandering through the huge and obscure mass of our mercantile literature, a dim line of twilight truth upon these subjects;—a suspicion rather hinted at than revealed, that, after all, the accumulating gold and silver might

not, when nations were in question, be the only mode of increasing their real wealth. But still it was not till Galiani in Italy, Harris in England, Quesnay in France, and, above all, Smith in Scotland, had published their respective works, that it became admitted to be an established principle, systematically examined and demonstratively proved, that national wealth may consist not only of gold and silver, but of all such things, at least, as men are content to give gold and silver in exchange for.

The circumstances which encourage and make easy, or which discourage and obstruct the production of wealth, taking this new and enlarged view of it, became at once the objects of anxious inquiry and speculation. In this new path Smith took the lead; and nothing which has been done since his time in this direction will bear a comparison with the results of his labours. But to those engaged in the pursuit of this branch of political economy another soon presented itself. It was not possible to investigate carefully the circumstances which affect the production of national wealth without being struck by the importance and influence of those which are connected with its distribution: and attempts to discover the laws which determine the respective shares of the landed proprietors, the owners of personal property, and the labourers, in the annual produce, gave occasion to a great deal of research, or rather, perhaps, a great deal of speculation. Such speculations were pursued the more earnestly, when it was perceived, as it necessarily

soon was, that the power of nations to support and render productive peculiar forms of taxation could be little understood till the laws were developed which determine the respective shares of the various classes of a community in the wealth annually created.

But the labours of those who have treated of the principles which govern the distribution of wealth have as yet been rewarded by no such success as that which has crowned the efforts of those who have investigated the circumstances which influence the amount produced. On this last branch of the subject much knowledge has been accumulated, and principles have been established, important both for theoretical and practical purposes, however difficult the application of them to particular circumstances may sometimes be. These constitute a body of political truths, in the solidity and permanence of which a majority of the enlightened and reflecting part of mankind may be said to have acquiesced: while attempts to explain the appointed course of the distribution of wealth, and to unfold the laws which limit and determine rents, wages, and profits, have hitherto led to little besides contradictory opinions; and startling, and in some instances, unhappily, disgusting and most mischievous paradoxes.

The germ of the doctrines of the earliest leading writers on these points, the French economists, may be traced pretty clearly to some hasty, and certainly very erroneous opinions, of our own great Locke. That sect of philosophers at last fancied they could

rigidly demonstrate, that a portion of the rent (the *produit net*), constituted a peculiar fund, from which alone all the revenues of the state must directly or indirectly be derived; and this strange and futile dogma came from their hands based on reasonings and assumptions, from which it appeared to result, that the amount of wages and the rate of profits are determined by causes which keep them beyond the reach of change, and preserve them untouched amidst the workings of any possible scheme of taxation. Mixed with some absurdities, and much rash and sophisticated reasoning, the writings of the economists contain many truths; and some of a high order and lasting importance: but even these could not save their reputation; and, by being interwoven in a mass of error, were for a time less current, and therefore less useful, than they must otherwise have been. The system found, it is true, some devoted and fanatical adherents; but in spite of the zeal of these supporters, and of its own theoretical plausibility, the instinctive judgment of mankind revolted from its strange conclusions; and by the great body of the reading world it was first derided, and then, except as occupying its spot in literary history, forgotten. Smith attempted little on this part of his great subject, and that little he did not do well: but his good sense kept him aloof from absurdities like those which disfigure the works of some who preceded, and of many who have followed him: and the caution with which he shrunk from plunging deep into the investigation shows, perhaps, that he was con-

scious of difficulties which he chose to avoid. Of him, however, it may be said with truth, that he had done as much as could be expected from one mind, when he had illustrated, applied, connected, and multiplied the truths which before his time existed insulated, and for the most part half developed, on one main branch of his subject. That subject, too, we know was itself at once elevated by the success of his work to a rank among the great objects of the intellectual efforts of mankind, which it is little likely ever again to lose; and which, we must hope, will, at some future day, insure the development of all its intricacies.

Mr. Malthus was the first philosopher, after Smith, who laid foundations for the farther progress of knowledge. The earliest distinct views of those laws which govern the revenues of the landed proprietors, and the wages of the labourers in the most advanced stages of civilization,* will always be to be traced in his works on population and on rent: and enough will remain to leave him the character of a powerful and original inquirer after truth, when time and the labours of many other minds have corrected some essential errors and some hasty extensions of principles—true in themselves, though of more local or limited application than, amidst the fervour of discovery, they appeared to their author to be. But Mr. Malthus has been singularly unfortunate in his successors; under their treatment, his works, instead of being made the founda-

* As far as rent is concerned, the late Sir Edward West ought to *share* this praise.

tions of a superstructure of useful truth, have been used to give the semblance of plausibility to a mass of error, ingenious and harmless in some of its parts, but, as a whole, most delusive, and unfortunately most mischievous.

On the subject of rent, Mr. Malthus, discarding the errors of the economists, showed satisfactorily that where land is cultivated by capitalists living on the profits of their stock, and able to move it at pleasure to other employments, there the expense of tilling the worst quality of land cultivated determines the average price of raw produce, while the difference of quality on the superior lands measures the rents yielded by them.

This was a step towards understanding the circumstances which affect the progress of a very limited division of rents, and the causes which in one very peculiar state of society determine the average prices of raw produce. Mr. Ricardo, however, overlooking altogether the limited extent of the field to which these principles were really applicable, undertook from them alone to deduce the laws which regulate the nature and amount of the revenue derived from land at all places and under all circumstances; and, not content with this, proceeded from the same narrow and limited data to construct a general system of the distribution of wealth, and to explain the causes of variations which take place in the rate of profits or amount of wages over the surface of the globe. Mr. Ricardo was a man of talent, and he produced a system very ingeniously combined of purely hypothetical

truths, which, however, a single comprehensive glance at the world as it actually exists is sufficient to show to be utterly inconsistent with the past and present condition of mankind.

Mr. Malthus' theory of population has been yet more lamentably abused. With the commanding influence of superior talent, he had fixed at once the attention of the world on a physical power possessed by the human race of multiplying its aggregate numbers, which, if long exerted to its greatest extent, or even to a much less extent, must demonstratively outstrip any possible increase of food; and he had shown that much of the happiness or misery of a large part of the population of nations must always depend on the extent to which this power is controlled by themselves, or on the modes by which population is kept down to the level of food by extraneous circumstances. The facts on this subject which he brought to light must always hold a prominent place in every inquiry into the causes which determine the social progress and condition of nations, and the *most* prominent place in such branches of those inquiries as have for their especial object the explanation of the laws which govern variations in the aggregate numbers of a people, and the amount of subsistence consumed by the great mass of every community, or in other words, its rate of wages. But to create and to perfect such an important department of human knowledge was hardly likely to be the lot of one man, and the great work of Mr. Malthus contains certainly the elements of many errors, mixed with the

portion of lasting truth which it was his fortune first to demonstrate. Those errors had their origin partly in a logically defective division of the checks to population which he enumerated and examined, partly in some obscurity and indecision existing in his own mind as to the amount of influence on the progress of the numbers of nations which might in practice be expected to be exercised by moral causes acting in opposition to the physical propensities of mankind.

It is the perilous privilege of really eminent men that their errors as well as their wisdom should be fertile in consequences. Those of Mr. Malthus led at once to forms of argument and to a phraseology which cast a gloom over the whole subject, and have had a very disastrous effect on the further progress of knowledge—more disastrous indeed than could possibly have been anticipated by any one not gifted with the power of foreseeing the strange combination of credulity and rashness which characterises many of the works in which his speculations have been pushed forwards to their supposed practical conclusions.

Taking together the two subjects of rent and of population as it affects wages, we shall find that the germs of truth brought to light by Mr. Malthus have been made to give apparent support to such doctrines as these,—that the revenues of the proprietors of the soil over the surface of the globe exist only because the qualities of different soils are different, and can only be increased as the differences in productiveness of the soils cultivated

increase; that this increase is always contemporary with a decrease in the productive powers of agriculture and in the gains of the productive classes, and comes ever with loss and distress in its train; and that the interests of the landlords which require such an increase are therefore always and necessarily opposed to the interests of the state and of every other class of society. The fortunes and position, in the ordinary progress of nations, of the owners of stock, the next leading body in communities, are decided on in a spirit scarcely less gloomy. The effects of that diminution in the productive powers of industry which is supposed to be indicated by increasing rents reach, it is said, the owners of capital in the shape of a dwindling rate of profits; and thus their own remuneration and their capacity to accumulate fresh funds for the employment of labour are always in a necessary course of gradual diminution, while cultivation is spreading itself to new soils or multiplying its means and efforts on the old. Of the two richer classes, therefore, the one is threatened that the increase of the people and the spread of tillage will bring to it an invidious wealth founded on the public distress; and the other is menaced with a gradual but inevitable decay, produced by the same causes and advancing at the same pace.

The fate revealed to the most important division of the population, to the great body of the people, was yet more appalling. In their case a further cause, and one dependent, like the decreasing fertility of the soil, on an unchangeable law of nature, was

pressing them unceasingly towards either misery or guilt. They were endowed, as a part of their physical constitution, with a power and tendency to multiply more rapidly than the means of subsistence; and their numbers could be kept down to the level of those means only by checks which resolve themselves into either guilt or misery, or into a pure state of moral restraint, which, according to the unhappily narrow definition of it given by the author of the doctrine, was necessarily so rare as to limit but little by its prevalence the wide action of suffering and vice. This last opinion really rested principally on a logical error before alluded to, in the division of those causes into which the admitted checks to population resolve themselves; but it was seized on and pushed to its most repulsive consequences with a headlong and pernicious eagerness, and served to augment the fearful amount of those elements of discord and suffering, which it was believed had been demonstrated to exist in the very constitution of man, and of the earth which he inhabits; and which, according to this school of writers, are necessarily called into a state of increasing action as the world becomes peopled and nations advance. The process by which these conclusions were arrived at involves, in truth, almost every possible fault to which inattention to facts, and a perverse abuse of the mere reasoning faculty can give birth. First, there is assumed a constantly decreasing power in agricultural industry as nations multiply and become more civilized: then, that those who procure subsistence

by manual toil, the labouring classes of the earth, are maintained exclusively on funds saved from income;—a supposition which, true as to one corner of the world, when stated and reasoned upon as an universal fact is essentially false and delusive:—and then to these primary and fatal blunders is added a notion, that the diminishing rate of profit observable as nations become numerous and rich indicates a decreasing power of accumulating fresh resources; a belief which could not be embraced for an instant without an almost wilful disregard of experience, and of the testimony which the history and statistical position of every country in the world bear to the laws really determining the varying powers of communities to accumulate capital. But the theoretical unsoundness of these doctrines, glaring as it must be to all who are in the habit of subjecting theoretical views to the test of facts, was thrown into the shade by the fearful daring exhibited in the practical inferences to which they have been pushed. The supposed continuous diminution in the returns to agriculture,—its assumed effects on the progress of accumulation—and then, by an erroneous inference from a fact itself false, a corresponding incapacity in mankind to provide resources for increasing numbers—these points having been first insisted on with a dogmatical air of scientific superiority, an apparent inconsistency between the permanence of human happiness and the natural action of the laws established by Providence was enforced. It was darkly, but confidently and sedulously hinted at, that the most cherished moral

feelings which guide the human heart were, after all, only a mass of superstition which it might be hoped would decay with the progress of philosophy; that means were in reserve, and ready to be circulated, of eluding the passions implanted by the Creator in the original constitution of the human race; and that thus at last human wisdom might be made to triumph over defects in the physical arrangements of Providence. Over the daring details with which this miserable philosophy was invested—its enduring robe of shame—and over the circumstances by which it was brought into actual contact with a part of the population, we must here draw a veil. But that the theoretical advocacy of these visions has, to a certain extent, tainted the moral feeling of a portion, we may hope a small portion, of the educated classes,—that their industrious dissemination by ready agents, worthy of the task, has begun the vile work of effecting self-degradation, and extinguishing all sentiment of moral dignity or worth, among a part of the lower orders,—are facts which all familiar with the subject know to be unhappily beyond the reach of doubt. And it is important that we should not underrate the mischievous moral effects and consequences of a superficial system of philosophy, when we are about to recommend those laborious and united efforts necessary to lay the wide foundations of that body of wholesome truth on these points, which we hope to show may be safely and solidly constructed.

But although they have had their appropriate sphere of mischief and delusion, it would be a mis-

take to suppose, that any of the doctrines we have been alluding to have met with a general reception. Philosophers rushing forwards to uncoil a theory may sometimes be observed shutting their eyes on the corrections offered by the world they live in; but mankind at large have different habits, founded on sounder views of the mode by which great general principles are to be detected amidst the confused action of many causes. It wants no great deal of logical acuteness to perceive, that in political economy maxims which profess to be universal can only be founded on the most comprehensive views of society. The principles which determine the position and progress, and govern the conduct, of large bodies of the human race, placed under different circumstances, can be learnt only by an appeal to experience. He must, indeed, be a shallow reasoner who, by mere efforts of consciousness, by consulting his own views, feelings, and motives, and the narrow sphere of his personal observation, and reasoning *a priori* from them expects that he shall be able to anticipate the conduct, progress, and fortunes of large bodies of men differing from himself in moral or physical temperament, and influenced by differences, varying in extent and variously combined, in climate, soil, religion, education, and government. But with the first appeal from the speculation of individuals to the results of experience, as presented by bodies of men really existing, all belief in such maxims on the distribution of wealth as those of which we have been speaking must vanish at once. As soon

as we withdraw our eyes from books to consult the statistical map of the world, it shows us that the countries in which the rent of land is highest, instead of exhibiting always indications of a decline in the efficiency of agriculture, are ordinarily those in which the largest populations are maintained in the greatest plenty by the exertions of the smallest proportion of their labouring hands. The decline in the rate of profit, which it is admitted may be observed in the advance of population and wealth, is so far from being seen to be accompanied by a decreasing productive power of industry in any of its branches, that in countries in which profits are low, as England and Holland, there industry is found in the most efficient state, and the rate at which capital is accumulating is the most rapid. On the other hand, in those countries in which the rate of profit has been long and permanently high, as in Poland, and many of the ruder parts of Europe and Asia, there the productive power of industry is almost proverbially feeble, and the rate at which capital is accumulating notoriously slow. These are facts which lead directly to the conclusion (of which a careful analysis of the various sources of accumulation will sufficiently show the soundness), that high profits, with a great productive power, and a rapid rate of accumulation, are, in the history of mankind, an exception and not the rule.

Again, looking at the rate of increase of the different orders of the population of any one country, it is seen at once that the higher and middle classes, that is, those classes which have an almost unlimited

command over food and all the means of a healthful subsistence, remain single more frequently, marry later, and increase more slowly, than those whose means of subsistence are more scanty; and comparing afterwards nation with nation, a similar fact forces itself upon us; and we see populations whose means are comparatively ample increasing less rapidly than those who are confessedly most wretched. These facts indicate at once, to an unprejudiced observer, the presence and influence, among communities of men, of causes which, coming into action during the progress of plenty and refinement, serve to moderate the exercise of man's physical power of increase,* and are not resolvable evidently into misery, and almost as evidently not into unmixed vice, or into a faultless state of moral restraint. The perception of this fact is of itself sufficient to inspire distrust in those dismal systems which teach that the whole human race is under the resistless dominion of an impulse, forcing ever its

* We shall not be supposed to refer to the law of nature proclaimed by Mr. Sadler, according to which the fecundity of females is diminished as population becomes dense. Of this we shall have a few words to say hereafter. It is enough for our present purpose to show, that the glance even of a hasty observer must detect the existence of such moderating causes as we are now speaking of, and see them to be distinct from misery, vice, or a faultless moral restraint. To show the nature of those causes, to throw light upon their details, to exhibit the manner in which their action is felt in different stages of civilization, and in communities differently organized—this is a serious task, the successful execution of any part of which presupposes wide and patient observation, and very cautious inferences. A portion of that task will be hereafter atempted, with a very deep sense both of its importance and its intricacy.

aggregate numbers forwards to the extreme limit of the subsistence they can procure; and that even wealth and plenty are only forces which impel communities gradually, but inevitably, towards want.

Between the fortunes, then, and varying relative position of the different orders of society as seen in the ordinary progress of civilization,—and the gloomy fate, the constant tendency to decline, the unceasing opposition of conflicting interests, as exhibited in the later theories of political economy:—there exist essential differences and contradictions which must strike even a superficial observer who thinks it worth while to recur to facts at all.

It is in vain to deny that from this, and perhaps from some other causes, a feeling of dislike to the whole subject has been creeping over a portion of the public mind. Political economy has been distrusted. The facts on which its conclusions must be founded have been thought too multitudinous, too variable, and too capricious in their combinations to admit of their being accurately observed or truly analyzed; or, consequently, of their yielding any safe permanent general principles: and men have been inclined to shrink from the task of even examining opinions which they have thought doomed only to startle without convincing, and then to disappear and give place to another crop of paradoxes.

This alienation has had an unkindly effect on the growth of knowledge, and has turned away from the labours necessary to promote its progress many of those whose minds were the best gifted with the

power of eradicating error, and advancing truth. But a little thought must surely show that the distrust earned by many who have treated of the subject has unjustly been extended to the subject itself.

It must be admitted that political economy must found all maxims which pretend to be universal on a comprehensive and laborious appeal to experience;—it must be remembered steadily, that the mixed causes which concur in producing the various phenomena with which the subject is conversant can only be separated, examined, and thoroughly understood by repeated observation of events as they occur, or have occurred, in the history of nations; and can never be submitted (except in cases extremely rare) to premeditated experiment; and we must not shrink from the inevitable conclusion, that the progress of knowledge on such a subject must be difficult and slow;* and *that*, almost in exact proportion to the extent of the field to be observed, and the complexity and intricacy of the results presented by it. Still, even these considerations, while they afford abundant ground for caution, afford none at all for despair. On the contrary, to a mind well instructed in the ordinary road which inductive science has travelled towards perfection, the very abundance and variety of the

* See in the Appendix some observations by Mr. Herschel on the different rates of progress of those sciences which are dependent on mere observation for their materials, and of those in which experiment can be resorted to. I have Mr. Herschel's leave to use these observations here, although it is possible that they may not be actually published before this work is out.

materials on which we have to work give rational ground for stedfast hope.

The progress of navigation and the spirit of adventure, a thirst for knowledge, gain, or power, have laid open the structure of society over the far greater part of the surface of the inhabited globe: and we can now embrace in one wide survey the influence of that structure on the wealth and happiness of communities of human beings, from their rudest to their most advanced states, and under all their varieties of form. To this vast living field of actual observation the universal story of past times adds another scarcely less extensive. It is true that the facts which best illustrate principles in any branch of knowledge are little likely to be carefully recorded before some glimmering perception of the principles themselves exists. Hence a neglect in the historians of past days to preserve whole classes of facts which would now be most precious to the philosophical inquirer; and hence, doubtless, in our own times, there pass away daily into oblivion, unnoted by traveller or chronicle, a multitude of events and circumstances, which the more full development of our present subject will hereafter show to have been rich in unheeded instruction. But still, careless or imperfect as have been the observations of contemporary writers, the wide range of history teems everywhere with facts which may, with care, be made to enlighten or correct us in our pursuit. The past and the present, then, concur in offering to us an abundant harvest of materials for the construction of a system of economical

truths, which shall be securely founded on the actual experience of mankind. If we observe these materials thoroughly, and infer from them with modesty and caution, it would be mere intellectual cowardice to despair of gaining sound knowledge in all the departments of political economy. Difficult as the task may be, we may well hope thus to obtain at last a distinct view of the laws according to which the produce of their land and labour is divided among the several classes which compose communities of men, under all their varieties of form and circumstances; and of the extent to which the influence of peculiar modes of that division is felt, when re-acting on the productive powers, as well as on the political and moral character and structure of nations.

Nor ought the passing theories which have successively been adopted and disappeared on these branches of political economy to daunt our hopes for the future. There has obviously been repeated here an error which has been committed so frequently in the pursuit of other objects of human attainment, that the very effort of exposing it has become wearisome. The warning voice of the great prophet of that wisdom which man earns as "the servant and interpreter of nature" * has again been raised in vain. Men have preferred the way of *anticipation* to that of *induction*; † they have shrunk from the inevitable conditions, the appointed labours, by which knowledge can alone be safely acquired; in their effort to establish general princi-

* Nov. Org. Ap. 1. † Nov. Org. Ap. 26 to 30, and passim.

ples, they have quitted too soon the duty of dwelling long and humbly among things, that they might prematurely take up the more fascinating employment of laying down those maxims of imposing generality which seem to elevate the inquirer at once into the legislator of his subject, and gift him, as if by some sudden manifestation of intellectual power, with an instant command over its remotest details.

Truth has been missed, therefore, not because a steady and comprehensive survey of the story and condition of mankind would not yield truth, even on this intricate subject, but because those who have been the most prominent in circulating error have really turned aside from the task of going through such an examination at all: have confined the observations on which they founded their reasonings to the small portion of the earth's surface by which they were immediately surrounded; and have then proceeded at once to erect a superstructure of doctrines and opinions, either wholly false, or, if partially true, as limited in their application as was the field from which the materials for them were collected.*

* An instance of this, which looks almost like wilfulness (relating however to a doctrine of inferior importance) occurs in a little work on political economy by M. Destutt de Tracy, a metaphysical writer of deserved eminence in his own department of literature. It is curious, because the fault is ushered in by a formula which seems meant to serve for its justification in that and all similar cases. After stating his individual experience as a proprietor in different parts of France, he says, "quand on a ainsi un champ suffisant "d'observations, on gagne plus à les *approfondir* qu'à les *étendre*;" and then, upon the strength of a maxim so consolatory to indolent

The work of which the following pages form a part has been constructed on a different plan, with more humble pretensions, and with an aim less lofty, though, it is hoped, not less useful, than that of those who begin by laying down axioms which command the whole subject. My object has been to get a sight of the principles which govern the distribution of the wealth annually produced by the lands and labour of the human race; and of the effects produced by the action of those principles among bodies of men existing under different circumstances. And this I have endeavoured to do under the guidance of an abiding assurance that the experience of the past and present can alone, on such a subject, afford any sure foundations for anticipations as to the future.

I have begun by analysing *rents*, because a small progress in this subject was sufficient to show that the greater part of the nations of the earth are still in that state which is properly called agricultural; that is, in which the bulk of their population depends wholly on agriculture for subsistence: and because, in this state of society, the relations between the proprietors of the soil and its occupiers deter-

speculators, he proceeds to announce as an universal law that metayer cultivation is peculiar to bad soils, "c'est le propre des mauvais "pays," a position the utter fallacy of which must have become immediately apparent to M. Destutt de Tracy, or indeed to any inquirer very much his inferior, if he had luckily adopted the plan *of extending* his observations to other districts, countries, or times, instead of that of *speculating profoundly* upon a limited stock of facts. Traité d'Economie Politique, par M. le Comte Destutt de Tracy, &c. pp. 122, 123, and note. What M. de Tracy has done in one point others have done in whole systems, as we shall see.

mine the details of the condition of the majority of the people, and the spirit and forms of their political institutions. While tracing the circumstances to which rents owe their origin, or those by which they are affected in their progress, there have been first marked out and examined a few extensive and very distinct classes of tenantry into which the occupiers of the cultivated surface of the globe soon show themselves to be divided. An endeavour has next been made to throw light on the forms and conditions of the contract between the proprietors and the cultivators which are peculiar to each of these classes, and on their distinct effects in the societies in which they prevail, whether economical, political, or moral. While travelling through this wide examination, some important principles have been developed, which are applicable to the whole mass of rents taken in the most general point of view.

The next, and yet more important division of the annual produce is that which is consumed as the *wages* of labour: and it is taken in the second, instead of in the first place, only because a clear perception of the causes which affect the amount of the remuneration received by the majority of the labourers in the world (the peasant cultivators) can only be attained *after* a survey of the forms and conditions of the various rents they pay.

In inquiring into wages, I have begun by appealing to the experience of the past and present to teach, first, what are the funds which support the labouring population of the globe: secondly, what

are the laws by which the numbers of those who are to share those funds are determined.

Uniting the results of these two branches of inquiry, we may attain from them a knowledge of the circumstances which determine the condition and prospects of those various and distinct classes of labourers which a careful view of the whole surface of human society brings before our notice.

Enumerating first the funds from which labour is supported, it has been shown that they are *various* and *different*, and that of these various funds that which is saved from income, and is most appropriately called *capital*, is only one and the least.

In approaching the subject of the numbers of those who are to share these funds, the whole subject of *population* presents itself, and the task cannot be avoided of examining both the laws which determine the power of the human race to increase its aggregate numbers, and those by which the exercise and effects of that power are controlled. To apply, however, the results of this general review to our immediate subject of wages, it will be necessary to recur to those different funds for the support of labour, the origin and limits of which will have been already analysed; and to show by a reference to the story and condition of the different divisions of mankind supported out of each of them, what are the peculiarities in the nature of those funds which the most materially affect the habits of the labourers; and through these stimulate or control their disposition to increase.

The laws which determine fluctuations in the

numbers of the labouring classes, and in the amounts of the funds devoted to their maintenance, once explained, the circumstances which determine the rate of wages in the different stages and forms of human society will be before us. After such a preparation, and with a proper knowledge of the actual statistical, moral, and political condition of particular communities, we may apply our knowledge of general principles with some confidence, whether for the purpose of explaining their present position, or of anticipating the future course of the mass of their population.

It is upon the same plan of eliciting principles from the most comprehensive survey it is in our power to make of the mass of human society in all its details and varieties, that the share of the annual produce allotted to the owners of *capital* has been investigated. In performing this task, I have not confined myself to those circumstances alone which affect the *rate* of profits, but have considered the growth of the *mass* of profits as a point of equal or indeed superior importance. With a view to understand fluctuations in each of these quantities, I have examined in the world, as it lies spread before us, the various and gradually multiplying functions of accumulated stock. They have been traced, first, in those rude tribes or nations among whom the savage may be discerned fashioning his weapons, or the cultivator, with a scanty stock, making the first imperfect attempts at tillage; and thence, through many an intermediate grade, to those more brilliant theatres of industry and the

arts, in which mankind may be observed, enriched by the successive accumulations of many generations, as well as by their own; and exercising by the aid of these a commanding and increasing productive power, whether employed in unfolding the resources of the earth, or in fashioning the material world to their purposes.

At each step of this progress, society is seen to receive a fresh impression and an altered form. To detect the laws which determine these changes, we shall watch the growth of the capitalists, and observe them at first scarcely distinguishable as a peculiar body; then separating themselves slowly from the mass of labourers or landowners with which they were before confounded; assuming a gradually increasing share in the direction of national industry; and influencing at last (in a few instances), in the most marked and decisive manner, not only the productive powers, but the social and political elements of nations. In the progress of this survey, there will have been marked the *various* sources gradually multiplying and enlarging themselves, which yield the successive additions made to the existing stock of accumulated wealth.

We come then to the causes which determine the *proportion* which the annual revenue allotted to its owners bears to the mass of accumulated wealth employed, that is, which determine the *rate* of profit: and while tracking the changes which take place in this, as communities became more full of wealth, we shall, from the results of our previous survey, have been placed in a position to explain a

phenomenon the existence of which (however contrary to doctrines lately current) the instances of our own country, and of a few others, will be seen to put beyond the reach of cavil or doubt:—namely, the increasing national power of rapid accumulation, which is seen to advance hand-in-hand with a decreasing *rate* of profits.

Rents, Wages, and Profits thus examined, the last division of our subject will be in sight, "The sources of *Taxation*." We shall here appeal first to history and facts, to dissipate the error which has led more than one sect of reasoners* to teach, that some portions of the wealth annually produced and distributed are marked by the peculiarity of yielding no revenue to the state, and that their receivers are unconsciously gifted with a power of throwing back on other classes the impositions nominally laid upon them. Tracing society then once more through its many forms and many stages, we shall endeavour to point out what in each is the nature and amount of the revenue drawn by the state from the incomes of the labourers, the landowners, or the capitalists. We shall then attempt to observe the limits of the financial fruitfulness of each class; and to determine the points at which an attempt to press further upon a single division ends in a real burthen upon one or both of the others.

Viewing then the revenues of the community as a whole, it may perhaps be practicable to estimate how far the state may share in the joint wealth of

* Locke and the Economists as to Profits and Wages; Ricardo (more partially) as to Wages.

its subjects, without causing production to retrograde; and where the limits are, beyond which all attempts to extract from a people a permanent public revenue fail, and if persevered in, serve only to impoverish the sources of wealth.

Most assuredly it is not even hoped that so large a field as that of which the outline has just been sketched has been fully explored in one survey, or all its harvest of instruction reaped. But however much may remain to be done, it is cheering to reflect that whatever knowledge is thus elicited by a legitimate and careful reference to experience cannot deceive us.

Even by the present imperfect effort, enough at least of knowledge has been so obtained, to demonstrate the error of those gloomy notions of a perpetual discord between rival interests in society, and of an inevitable tendency to ultimate decline, which it has been the evil triumph of the specious reasonings lately inculcated on these subjects to make, to a certain extent, plausible and current. We shall see first rising up before us in all parts of the globe this prominent and unquestionable fact;—that under no form or modification of the relations between the proprietors and cultivators are the permanent interests of the landlords opposed to those of the community at large. We shall observe circumstances and ties gradually unfolding themselves, which, in every stage and form of civilization, completely identify the real interests of the owners of the soil with those of society; and make the permanent and progressive growth of the

revenues of the landed body not only consistent with, but dependent on, the prosperous career of their tenantry, and of the community to which they belong. Next, that fall of the rate of profits which is so common a phenomenon as to be almost a constant attendant on increasing population and wealth, is, it will be seen, so far from indicating greater feebleness in any branch of industry, that it is usually accompanied by an increasing productive power in all, and by an ability to accumulate fresh resources, more abundantly and more rapidly.* So far, therefore, is this circumstance from being, as it has hastily been feared and described to be, an unerring symptom of national decay, that it will be shown to be one of the most constant accompaniments and indications of economical prosperity and vigour.

Turning, then, to that part of the animal constitution of mankind which makes an extremely rapid increase of their numbers possible under certain circumstances, (which has been the cause of yet more formidable apprehensions,) it will be seen that it is an error to suppose that the consequences of this power of increase present any real obstacle

* If the prepossessions of any reader should lead him at once to treat this statement as paradoxical, let me beg of him to turn his eye to the growing powers of production and accumulation displayed by England during the last century, and to compare them with those of the countries in Europe in which profits have continued the highest. The review must, I think, at least produce patience to wait for the demonstration which is promised of the truth of the statement in the text.

to the permanent ease and happiness of any class of society.

But before we proceed with the little we have to say on this subject now, there are a few preliminary observations to be made. The states of society from which the principles here developed are collected are such as are found actually existing over the surface of the earth. Some portion of misery and vice therefore will meet our view at every step, and of these a part may doubtless be traced to the consequences of man's animal power of multiplying rapidly his kind. Nay more, while the world exists, considerable suffering arising from this cause will always probably be to be met with. So far therefore, the sufferings which can be traced to this source, like those produced by the earthquake or the storm, belong to a course of events which we may not flatter ourselves we shall ever be able wholly to arrest. Both have their origin in the physical constitution of the creation. As a consequence of this view of the power of multiplication, it has been truly stated, that those persons who do not see in evils produced by purely material causes anything inconsistent with the benevolence of the Creator, act very idly in being indignant with others, who assert the constant presence of a certain quantity of suffering and evil, which is produced by causes of a mixt character, partly moral and partly physical, such as those are which influence the growth of the numbers of mankind. But then we must not be led too far by this analogy. There are important distinctions between evils produced

by the action of mere material causes, and those evils in the production of which man is himself an agent. In the one case the amount of evil to be endured is certain and unavoidable, and the individual sufferers cannot escape their doom. In the latter case the average amount of evil may be indefinitely diminished by human efforts, and no individual sufferer is necessarily a victim.

The earthquake and the storm do their appointed work, and man can hardly produce a perceptible influence on the amount of their ravages, or the fate of the sufferers. Now it must be allowed that the passions which lead to wrong and violence are as much a part of the Creator's work as the obscure causes which produce physical convulsions. But then the average amount of wrong or violence may be diminished indefinitely by the institution of good laws, and by the greater prevalence of sound morals: and no individual robber or murderer is recognized to be a fated victim, compelled to be such by Providence itself. These two important reflections go very far to remove both the gloomy and the depraved tendency which some have perversely persisted in affixing to all admissions of the constant presence of a certain quantity of moral evil. If we apply a similar distinction to the case of communities, and to the peculiar class of evils we are now considering, we shall find in the statistical history of nations satisfactory indications of this truth, that although cases of national suffering caused by superabundant numbers may be traced to the animal constitution of man, and so to

the physical structure of the universe, and will *probably* always prevail to some extent; still that, *first,* the average amount of those sufferings may be repressed indefinitely by human effort, and by the re-action of moral causes; and *then,* that no one community is necessarily doomed to endure any portion of such suffering at all. This view of the subject is evidently full of cheerful promise to all enlightened and well-governed societies, as it is too of plain instruction to individuals, whom it very clearly warns, that their aim and wisdom must ever be to fulfil their own duties, and follow up their own chances of happiness steadily, without casting furtive glances towards the general mass of evil, as a source of either perplexity or excuse.

These considerations once understood, we may proceed; and it will be obvious that, since the subject of population, as connected with wages, must occupy an important portion of our inquiry, it will be our business to appeal to the experience of mankind as contained by the past story and present condition of its various branches, and to collect thence a knowledge of the circumstances which in different forms and stages of society contribute to the prevalence of moral control over the powers of increase. The results of such a survey will be found to be these: viewing the subject first as it affects the human race generally, and with no reference to wages, we shall see that the disposition to exert the full animal power of increase yields readily in the upper classes to the accumulating force of various motives for restraint which neces-

sarily multiply and gather more joint strength with the growth of those artificial wants, the fruit of wealth and refinement. Limiting our observations, then, to the labourers in the less advanced stages of society, we shall observe a great influence exercised over the industrious classes by others, which controls the exercise of their full powers of increase; and when those ruder stages are passed through, and the lower classes are, like the higher, abandoned wholly to the guidance of such motives as may spring up within their own bosoms, we shall again, in their case, have to trace the effects of refinement and the multiplication of artificial wants gradually influencing the whole mass as they always influence the upper portion of society. And where the gradual spread of refinement does not produce the effect of moderating the rate of increase of the mass of a population, we shall be able to trace the failure to unfavourable peculiarities in the circumstances or in the legislation of nations.

During this survey we shall have abundant opportunities of observing that those natural and wholesome causes of retardation which come into general action with the spread of increasing prosperity are never found necessarily accessary to the increase of vicious habits, much less dependent on them. The Providence which implanted in the heart of man his feelings as to right and wrong will never be found to act so inconsistently with its own purposes as to make pollution and crime means for attaining or retaining the happiness of mankind. On the contrary, the portion of voluntary restraint

necessary to produce such an influence on the progress of numbers as calculation may show to be rationally desirable in any stage of society, will be observed introducing a long train of wholesome consequences, and among them much dignity, energy, and intellectual and moral purity and elevation. These, after a fair balance has been struck, will be seen very far to outweigh that portion of evil which (such is the condition of humanity) will in this as in all other cases be found mingling itself among the consequences of the wisest institutions of our race, and of the best and most exalted feelings and passions of our nature.

When we have advanced so far with our examination of the phenomena which regulate or follow the distribution of the annual produce into rent, wages, and profits, we shall at least have shown that the deep gloom which was thought to overhang much of the subject was but an illusion; that no causes of inevitable decay haunt the fortunes of any class during the progressive development of the resources of a country; that the interests of no portion of society are ever permanently in opposition to those of any other; and that there is nothing either in the physical constitution of man, or in that of the earth which he inhabits, that need enfeeble the hopes and exertions of those to whom the high, and, if properly understood, cheerful and animating, task is committed, of labouring, through wise laws and honest government, to secure the permanent harmony and common prosperity of all classes of society.

But these general views are but a portion, though, in the present state of public opinion, they are perhaps not the least important portion of our subject. There remain to be developed and explained a variety of minor truths, which, if this branch of political economy is ever to be a safe and useful guide, must be securely placed on the firm basis of experience. The principles which contain many of these will, it is hoped, be found so established here: but I should show that I ill understood the extent and difficulty of the subject, and the mode of mastering it which I have myself so strenuously recommended, did I not state my conviction that to complete the knowledge really and securely attainable on the subjects treated in the following pages, will still require the patient and assiduous observations and labour of many minds, and probably of more than one generation. During this process, the too hasty erection of whole systems, a frail thirst for the premature exhibition of commanding generalities, will probably continue to be the sources of error most to be guarded against. It is assuredly not by indulging and encouraging such errors that the boundary of human knowledge in this direction will be successfully or safely approached. The portions of truth which can in the first instance be safely attained must necessarily be narrow principles, grounded upon a limited field of experience cautiously and patiently worked out. Wider generalities of more scientific simplicity can only be approached after these intermediate truths have been mastered. This is the appointed course of

true and permanent science. To spring at once from partial and broken observations to the most general axioms, to dart from a state of ignorance and confusion upon the fundamental and ultimate elements of systematic knowledge, without touching the ground during the intermediate flight: this is the course of a rash theorist, and not of a philosopher; and those who have often tracked that course must know but too well, that the very simplicity and commanding aspect of propositions so attained is much oftener a warning of the insecurity of their application than any evidence of their truth.

It will not be thought, I hope, that these many warnings come of faint-heartedness. Did I not distinctly see in the far distance a goal worthy of the toil, I should not have applied my shoulder to the humble task of advancing the car of knowledge one span's length in its career. I firmly believe that the day will come when the most intricate practical problems connected with the whole subject of the "*Distribution of Wealth*" will be readily solved by the application of principles firmly established and thoroughly understood; nor do I think that this confidence is tinged with rashness. If in the road to truth through observation and induction, men can advance only by slow and laborious steps, it is at least the privilege of those who tread it to see through its long vista a cheering spectacle of final triumphs. While viewing the destined progress of a career so full of majesty and promise, they may forget without presumption both their

own individual feebleness and that of their fellow men, and look forward to conquests to be won by the united efforts of the race, and by the growing discoveries of successive generations.

Before I close this Preface, the grateful task remains to be performed of returning my thanks to the University of Cambridge, and to the Syndics of its Press, for having extended their assistance to my attempt. These pages were printed at their press, and at their expense. The aid thus given is in itself an obligation: but the feelings with which it is received are in my case considerably heightened by its being in some measure a renewal in maturer life of my connexion with a body which I have never ceased to regard with the utmost affection and respect, because I owe to my entrance into it much of the purest and most vivid happiness of my early life, and opportunities at least of intellectual culture, for which I can only feel the more grateful as advancing years show me more clearly what benefits they *may* bestow on those who have the good fortune and the industry to use them worthily.

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It has been mentioned to me, that I have given no regular definition of the word Rent. *The omission was not undesigned. On a subject like this, to attempt to draw conclusions from definitions is almost a sure step towards error. A dissertation, however, on the use and abuse of definitions would be out of its place here. I have pointed out the origin of payments made to the owners of the soil. I have tracked their progress. If any reader, during this inquiry, is really puzzled to know what we are observing together, I shall be sorry; but I am quite sure that I should do him no real service, by presenting him in the outset with a definition to reason from.*

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

DIVISION OF SUBJECT.

THE word Wealth presents itself to different minds with such variety of meaning, that it will be best to begin by fixing on some conventional limit to the sense in which the term shall be used. The definition of Mr. Malthus is, of the many which have been proposed, perhaps the least objectionable and the most convenient. Wealth, according to him, consists of those material objects which are necessary, useful, or agreeable to mankind.* In this restricted sense the word will be used here. Instances of occasional deviation from it, if any occur, shall be marked. It will be understood, however, that this definition is proposed as useful in limiting our subject, not as furnishing the basis of any conclusions

* Prin. of Pol. Econ., p. 28. I think this definition, as it stands, is on the whole rather preferable to the slightly altered version of it which Mr. Malthus has since adopted in his Work on Definitions, p. 234. Neither of them, perhaps, are perfectly proof against a pains-taking objector. Either would very well answer our present purpose of restricting the subject on which we are about to enter to some definite limits.

relating to it. If a more comprehensive interpretation of the term *Wealth* should be preferred, the results of the facts or reasonings we shall have to adduce will be in no degree affected by the change.

All wealth, whatever be its source, is made available for the purposes of man by human labour: by that even the spontaneous productions of the earth must be gathered and appropriated. Hence the hands from which all wealth is first distributed must be those of the labourer. But the labourer is rarely in a condition to retain the whole produce of his exertions. In whatever state of society he exists, some tie, or some want, makes him to a certain extent dependent upon others. Those who constitute the larger proportion of the labouring class throughout the world find no fund accumulated by others, from which they may draw their daily subsistence: they are obliged therefore to raise it with their own hands from the soil. If that soil belongs to others, this circumstance alone makes the peasants at once tributary to the proprietors, and a portion of the produce is distributed as *Rent*. If besides the soil other things are needful to facilitate their exertions, to the owner of these things another part of the produce must be resigned, and hence the origin of *Profits*. The share of the labourer, the reward of mere personal exertion, in whatever shape, or manner, or time, it may be received, constitutes the *Wages* of labour. Into these three portions, Rent, Profits, and Wages, the annual produce of the land and labour of every country is in the first instance divided: all other revenues are derived from these. The whole subject of the distribution of wealth then naturally separates itself into three

divisions, which may conveniently be made the subject of three books, devoted to the examination of those circumstances which in different stages of society determine the amount, first of Rent, then of Wages; thirdly of Profits. In a fourth book, if our plan should be completed, we shall attempt to trace the revenue which the state at successive periods usually derives from each of these.

The present volume will contain the book on Rent.

SECTION I.

ON THE ORIGIN OF RENTS: ON THEIR DIVISION INTO PRIMARY AND SECONDARY, OR PEASANT AND FARMER'S RENTS.

WHEN mankind have become sufficiently numerous to be driven from the pastoral state to agriculture for subsistence, and before sufficient funds have accumulated in the possession of others to supply the body of the people with their daily bread, they must extract it with their own hands from the soil, or they must starve. While thus circumstanced they may, or may not, be themselves the owners of the implements, seed, &c., by the assistance of which their manual labour applied to the soil produces them a continuous maintenance; a stock which if used for any other purpose must soon be exhausted: such a stock, if they possess it, is in their peculiar circumstances entirely deprived of its mobility; it is convertible to no other purpose, and is confined to the task of assisting cultivation, by the same necessity which compels its owners to

extract their food from the earth: and the returns to stock so situated, like the returns to the labours of its owners (or their wages), must be governed by the terms on which land can be obtained. Should the surface of the country which such a people inhabit be appropriated, the only chance which the cultivator has of being allowed to occupy that portion of it from which he has to draw his subsistence rests upon his being able to pay some tribute to the owner. The power of the earth to yield, even to the rudest labours of mankind, more than is necessary for the subsistence of the cultivator himself, enables him to pay such a tribute: hence the origin of rent. A very large proportion of the inhabitants of the whole earth are precisely in the circumstances we have been describing; sufficiently numerous to have resorted to agriculture: too rude to possess any accumulated fund in the shape of capital, from which the wages of the labouring cultivators can be advanced. These cultivators in such a state of society comprise always, from causes we shall hereafter arrive in sight of, an overwhelming majority of the nation. As the land is then the direct source of the subsistence of the population, so the nature of the property established in the land, and the forms and terms of tenancy to which that property gives birth, furnish to the people the most influential elements of their national character. We may be prepared, therefore, to see without surprise the different systems of rents which in this state of things have arisen out of the peculiar circumstances of different people, forming the main ties which hold society together, determining the nature of the connection between the governing part of the com-

munity and the governed, and stamping on a very large portion of the population of the whole globe their most striking features, social, political, and moral.

If indeed it were true, as some have fancied, that lands were always first appropriated by those who are willing to bestow pains on their cultivation; if in the history of mankind it were an ordinary fact, that the uncultivated lands of a country were open to the industry or necessities of all its population; then some time would elapse in the progress of agricultural nations before rents made their appearance at all; and when they did appear, still, while any portion of the country remained unoccupied, the rents paid on the lands already cultivated would only be in exact proportion to their superiority, from position or goodness, over the vacant spots.

Such a state of things might occur; it is an abstract possibility: but the past history and present state of the world yield abundant testimony, that it neither is, nor ever has been, a practical truth, and that the assumption of it, as the basis of systems of political philosophy, is a mere fallacy.

When men begin to unite in the form of an agricultural community, the political notion they seem constantly to adopt first, is that of an exclusive right, existing somewhere, to the soil of the country they inhabit. Their circumstances, their prejudices, their ideas of justice or of expediency, lead them, almost universally, to vest that right in their general government, and in persons deriving their rights from it.

The rudest people among whom this can at present be observed are perhaps some of the Islanders

of the South Seas. The soil of the Society Islands is very imperfectly occupied; the whole belongs to the sovereign; he portions it among the nobles, and makes and resumes grants at his pleasure. The body of the people, who live on certain edible roots peculiar to the country, which they cultivate with considerable care, receive from the nobles, in their turn, permission to occupy smaller portions. They are thus dependent on the chiefs for the means of existence, and they pay a tribute, a rent, in the shape of labour and services performed on other lands.*

On the continent of America, the institutions of those people, who before its discovery had resorted to agriculture for subsistence, indicate also an early and complete appropriation of the soil by the state. In Mexico there were crown lands cultivated by the services of those classes who were too poor to contribute to the revenue of the state in any other manner. There existed too a body of about 3000 nobles possessed of distinct hereditary property in land. "The tenure by which the great body of the "people held their property was very different. In "every district a certain quantity of land was mea- "sured out in proportion to the number of families. "This was cultivated by the joint labour of the "whole: its produce was deposited in a common "storehouse, and divided among them according to "their respective exigencies."† While in Peru "all the lands capable of cultivation were divided "into three shares. One was consecrated to the "Sun, and the produce of it was applied to the "erection of temples, and furnishing what was re-

* Appendix.

† Robertson's America, book vii.

"quisite towards celebrating the public rites of "religion: The second belonged to the Inca, and "was set apart as the provision made by the com- "munity for the support of government. The third "and largest share was reserved for the maintenance "of the people among whom it was parcelled out. "Neither individuals, however, nor communities "had a right of exclusive property in the portion "set apart for their use. They possessed it only "for a year, at the expiration of which a new divi- "sion was made in proportion to the rank, the num- "ber, and the exigencies of each family."*

Throughout Asia, the sovereigns have ever been in the possession of an exclusive title to the soil of their dominions, and they have preserved that title in a state of singular and inauspicious integrity, undivided, as well as unimpaired. The people are there universally the tenants of the sovereign, who is the sole proprietor; usurpations of his officers alone occasionally break the links of the chain of dependence for a time. It is this universal dependence on the throne for the means of supporting life which is the real foundation of the unbroken despotism of the Eastern world, as it is of the revenue of the sovereigns, and of the form which society assumes beneath their feet.

In modern Europe the same rights once prevailed, but here they were soon moderated, and finally disappeared. The subordinate chiefs, who followed in crowds the leaders of the barbarian irruptions, were little accustomed to tolerate constant dependence and regular government, and utterly unfit to become its support and agents.

* Robertson's America, book vii.

Yet even by them the abstract right of the sovereign to the soil was very generally recognized. Traces of it are still preserved in the language of our laws; the highest title a subject can claim is that of *tenant* of the fee, and the terms of this *tenancy* made originally the only difference in the extent of interests in estates.

The steps by which beneficiaries became the real proprietors are familiar to almost all classes of readers; it is enough for our present purpose to see that in Europe, as in Asia and South America, the soil was practically appropriated by the sovereign or a limited number of individuals, at a time when the bulk of the people were wholly dependent on the occupation of portions of it for their subsistence, and when they became therefore, inevitably, tributary to its owners.

The United States of North America, though often referred to in support of different views, afford another remarkable instance of the power vested in the hands of the owners of the soil, when its occupation offers the only means of subsistence to the people. The territories of the Union still unoccupied, from the Canadian border to the shores of the Floridas, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, are admitted, in law and practice, to be the property of the general government. They can be occupied only with its consent, in spots fixed on and allotted by its servants, and on the condition of a previous money payment. That government does not, it is true, convert the successive shoals of fresh applicants into tenants, because its policy rejects such a measure. Its legislators inherited from the other hemisphere at the outset of their career the advan-

tages of an experience accumulated during centuries of progressive civilization: they saw that the power and resources of their young government were likely to be increased more effectually by the rapid formation of a race of proprietors, than by the creation of a class of state tenantry. It has been suggested, that they may have acted unwisely in overlooking such a mode of creating a permanent public revenue. Had they perversely entertained the will to do so, unquestionably they had the power. Their rapidly increasing numbers could have been sustained only by the spread of cultivation. As fresh settlements became necessary to the maintenance of the people, the government might have made its own terms when granting the space from which alone the population could obtain subsistence; and this without parting with the property of the soil. Had this been done, the career of the nation, essentially different from what it has been, would more closely have resembled that of the people of the old world.

In the English colonies of Australia, an unsettled territory, which will bear comparison with the wastes of North America in extent, is the acknowledged property of the crown. A system of disposing of the public lands has lately been adopted, which is a mean between an absolute sale and the creation of a permanent tenantry.* The person receiving a grant is subject to a moderate rent, which he may commute for the payment of a specific sum.†

* Emigration Report, p. 397, Appendix II.

† In proposing present terms to persons inclined to settle at the Swan River, the Colonial Office formally declares an intention of

Throughout central Africa the consent of the king or chief must be obtained before any spot of ground can be cultivated.*. We know but little of the subsequent rights of the cultivator, or of his connection with the sovereign; but the necessity of applying for permission implies a power to withhold it, or to grant it conditionally.

The past history and present state therefore of the old and new world yield abundant proof of the visionary nature of those notions as to the origin of rent, which rest upon an assumption, that it is never the immediate result of cultivation; and that while any land remains unoccupied, no rent will be paid for the cultivated part, except such as is warranted by its superiority over that part which is supposed to be always open to the industry of the community.

We come back then to the proposition, that, in the actual progress of human society, rent has usually originated in the appropriation of the soil, at a time when the bulk of the people must cultivate it on such terms as they can obtain, or starve; and when their scanty capital of implements, seed, &c., being utterly insufficient to secure their maintenance in any other occupation than that of agriculture, is chained with themselves to the land by an overpowering necessity. The necessity, then, which compels them to pay a rent, it need hardly be observed, is wholly independent of any difference in the quality of the ground they occupy, and would not be removed were the soils all equalized.

granting lands after 1830 on such conditions only as may then seem advisable to Government.

† Park's Travels in Africa, p. 260.

The rents thus paid by the labourer, who extracts his own wages from the earth, may be called *peasant* rents, using the term peasant to indicate an occupier of the ground who depends on his own labour for its cultivation; or they may be called *primary* rents, because, in the order of their appearance in the progress of nations towards civilization, they invariably precede that other class of rents to which we have now to advert.

ON THE ORIGIN OF SECONDARY OR FARMER'S RENTS.

Much time seldom elapses, after the formation of an agricultural community, before some imperfect separation takes place between the departments of labour. The body of artizans and mechanics bear at first a very small proportion to the whole numbers of the people: some of these soon become able to store up such a quantity of food, implements, and materials, as enable them to feed and employ others, to take the results of their labour, and to exchange them again for more food, and all that is necessary to continue the process. A class of capitalists is thus formed, distinct from that of labourers and landlords. This class sometimes (but, taking the earth throughout, very rarely) makes its appearance on the land, and takes charge of its cultivation. The agricultural labourer no longer depends for subsistence upon the crops he raises from the soil; and the landlord, instead of receiving his share directly from the hands of the labourer, receives it *indirectly* through those of the new employer.

Since these rents invariably succeed in the order

of civilization the class already pointed out, they may be called *secondary* rents; or, because the capitalist, who becomes responsible for the rent of land which he cultivates by the labour of others, is usually called a farmer, these rents may conveniently be called *farmer's* rents, and so distinguished from peasant rents.

There are cases, no doubt, in which it is difficult to determine to which of these two classes, the peasant or farmer's rents, the rents paid by particular individuals belong. But this is a circumstance which need embarrass the inquiries of none but those who delight in surrounding a subject with refinements and difficulties of their own creation. We shall find the two classes over vast regions of the globe distinctly and broadly separated in their form, their effects, and the causes of their variations: and it would be very useless trifling to linger and puzzle over those very limited spots alone, where they are in a state of mixture and confusion.

The circumstances which determine the amount of peasant rents are much less complex than those which determine the amount of farmer's rents. In the case of these last, the amount of wages is first determined by causes foreign to the contract between the proprietor and the tenant, and then the amount of rent is strictly limited by the amount of the profits on the capital used; which capital, if those profits are not realized, may be withdrawn to another employment. The causes which determine the ordinary rate of those profits are also independent of the contract between the landlord and tenant, and form a distinct subject of inquiry. In the case of the first class, or peasant rents, the amount

both of wages and rents is determined solely by the bargain made between the proprietors and a set of labourers, whose necessities chain them to the soil with the small capital they use to aid their labour and procure food; and the causes which govern the terms of that bargain are comparatively simple.

The class of secondary or farmer's rents is that with which we are the most familiar in England, or rather that with which we are alone familiar; and this familiarity has caused peasant rents in their numerous varieties not only to be neglected in our investigations, but, in truth, to be overlooked altogether. And yet, as has been before suggested, compared with these, the mass of farmer's rents to be found on the globe is very small. In England and in most parts of the Netherlands secondary rents exclusively prevail. In the Highlands of Scotland they are only at this moment displacing the last remains of the more primitive form: in France, before the Revolution, they were found on about one-seventh part of the land: in the other countries of Europe they are much more rare, throughout Asia hardly known. We shall be making on the whole an extravagant allowance, if we suppose them to occupy one-hundredth part of the cultivated surface of the habitable globe.

If we consider principally the numbers of the human race whose fate they influence, or the extent of the regions of which the social condition receives its impress from them, then peasant rents under their various forms will be the most interesting and important. If our taste leads us to undertake the discussion of these subjects as a scientific problem, the main interest of which consists in the

exercise it affords to the powers of analysis and combination, perhaps the second class (or farmer's rents) may not be undeserving of the exclusive attention it has received.

SECTION II.

ON PEASANT RENTS: ON THEIR SEPARATION INTO LABOUR, METAYER, RYOT, AND COTTIER RENTS.

WHILE the labourer is confined to the culture of the soil on his own account, because it is in that manner alone that he can obtain access to the wages on which he is to subsist, the form and amount of the Rents he pays are determined by a direct contract between himself and the proprietor. The provisions of these contracts are influenced sometimes by the laws, and almost always by the long established usages, of the countries in which they are made. The main object in all is, to secure a revenue to the proprietors, with the least practicable amount of trouble or risk on their part.

Though governed in common by some important principles, the variety in the minuter details of this class of Rents is of course almost infinite. But men will be driven in similar situations to very similar expedients, and the general mass of peasant rents may be separated into four great divisions, comprising, 1st, Labour Rents, 2dly, Metayer Rents, 3dly, Ryot Rents (borrowing the last term from the country in which we are most familiar with them, India).

These three will be found occupying in contigu-

ous masses the breadth of the old world, from the Canary Islands to the shores of China and the Pacific; and deciding, each in its own sphere, not merely the economical relations of the landlords and tenants, but the political and social condition of the mass of the people.

To these must be added a fourth division, that of Cottier Rents, or Rents paid by a labourer extracting his own wages from the land, but paying his rent in money, as in Ireland and part of Scotland. This class is small, but peculiarly interesting to Englishmen, from the fact of its prevalence in the sister island, and from the influence it has exercised, and seems likely for some time yet to exercise, over the progress and circumstances of the Irish people.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION I.

LABOUR RENTS, OR SERF RENTS.

THE landed proprietors of rude nations usually dislike, and are unfit for, the task of superintending labour, and if they can rely, through the receipt of produce rents, on a supply of necessaries suited to their purposes, they uniformly throw upon the peasant the whole business of cultivation. But their being able to do this in security supposes in the tenants themselves some skill, and habits of voluntary and regular labour: they must be trust-worthy too, to a certain extent. There is, however, a point in the progress of civilization below which the body of the people do not possess these qualifications: when, though driven to agriculture by their numbers, they still possess many of the qualities of the savage; and are not yet ripe for the regular payment of produce or money rents; because their ignorance, their impatience of toil, and their improvidence, would expose the proprietor to considerable danger of starvation, if he depended on their punctuality for the support of himself and his household.

However averse to the employment the proprie-

tors may be, they must, in this stage of society, take some share in the burthen of conducting cultivation. They may contrive, however, to get rid of the task of raising food for the labourers who are the instruments of that cultivation. They usually set aside for their use a portion of the estate, and leave them to extract their own subsistence from it, at their own risk. They exact, as a rent for the land thus abandoned, a certain quantity of labour, to be used upon the remaining portion of the estate, which is retained in the hands of the proprietor. Such is the expedient which seems generally to have suggested itself to the owners of the soil, while the labourers have been in this state of half civilization, and while no capitalists yet existed.

In the Society Islands, the chiefs allot to their tenants about sixty acres of land each. The rent paid for these consists of work done for a certain number of days at the call of the chief on his own demesne farm.* They are perhaps the rudest people among whom this mode of occupying and cultivating the soil can be observed; and it is instructive to remark among these islanders of the Antipodes the necessities of their position giving birth to a system, which was once nearly universal in Europe, and which still prevails over the larger portion of it.

Arrangements somewhat similar to these exist in some of our West Indian Islands, between the negroes and the owners of the estates to which they belong.

But the people by whom labour rents were established on the widest scale, and were communicated to the vast countries in which they did, or do,

* Appendix III.

principally prevail, were the nations of Eastern Europe, the inhabitants of the deserts of Germany, and the wastes beyond the Vistula. Some of the tribes who invaded the lower empire had begun to resort partially to agriculture for subsistence before the period of their irruption, and it is probable that this system was even then not unknown to them; but however this may have been, they certainly established it most extensively throughout their conquests in Western Europe; and when their own fastnesses, the wastes from which they had migrated, became more regularly peopled and settled, this was the mode of cultivating the land which universally prevailed there. It prevails there still. In their conquests westward of the Rhine, it took for a time strong hold of the habits of the people to whom they introduced it, has left deep traces in their laws, and yet lingers in particular spots; but from this portion of Europe, the peculiar circumstances of some nations, and the advance of civilization in all, have repelled the system, which has given place to other forms of the relation between proprietors and tenants. In the countries eastward of the Rhine it is still found paramount; not wholly unbroken, and showing everywhere symptoms of gradual or approaching change, but fashioning still the frame of society, and exercising a predominant influence over the industry and fortunes of all ranks of people.

These labour rents may, with some little extension of the ordinary use of the term serf, be all called *serf* rents.

As labour or serf rents have gradually receded from the West, so it is on the western extremity

of the countries in which they still prevail that their decomposition is the most advanced. To observe them, therefore, in their complete state, we must go at once to the east of Europe, and begin with Russia, and may trace them thence, gradually decaying in form and spirit, through Hungary, Livonia, Poland, Prussia, and Germany, to the Rhine, on the borders of which they melt away into different systems, and are no longer to be recognized.

SECTION II.

ON LABOUR OR SERF RENTS IN RUSSIA.

In Russia the peasants, who are settled on the soil, receive from the proprietor a quantity of land, great or small, as his discretion or convenience dictate, from which they extract their wages. They are bound to work on the demesnes of the landowner three days in the week. The obligation would be light, were it not for the results it has led to. In Russia this mode of occupying the soil has established the complete personal bondage of the peasant: he has become, with all his family and descendants, the slave of the lord. Such too has been the result of similar relations between the proprietor and his tenants, wherever they have prevailed among semi-barbarous people and feeble general governments.* From the countries westward

* Sweden and Norway must be excepted. No information, written or verbal, which I have been able to collect, has made me feel satisfied that I understand the real history of the changes in the tenure, or in the mode of occupying the soil, which have taken place in those

of Russia the same state of bondage, once common, is disappearing by degrees. In Russia, as in its last stronghold, it still subsists entire.

It is not difficult to trace the steps by which labour rents prepared so generally the servile condition of the peasants, and covered Europe during the middle ages with a race of predial bondsmen. A rude people, dependent upon their own labour on their allotment for their support, were often exposed, from the failure of the crops or the ravages of war, to utter destitution. The lord was usually able, out of his store-houses, to afford them some relief, which they had no means of repaying but by additional labour. From this and other causes, the serf did, and does perpetually, owe to his lord nearly the whole of his time.† Besides this, they were mainly dependent on him for protection from strangers and from each other. From his domestic tribunal, he settled their differences and punished their faults with an authority which the general government was in no condition to supersede, and which became at last sanctioned by usage and equivalent to law. The patriarchal authority of the Highland chiefs had no other source. In them it was at once dignified and moderated by supposed ties of blood. Elsewhere it received no such miti-

countries. I can only suspect that the progress of Sweden, in these respects, has resembled, in some measure, that of the German nations: while that of Norway has been distinct and very peculiar. Labour rents, however, under various modifications, have been, and are now, known in both countries.

† See Bright's description of what takes place in Hungary even now, although the Austrian government has interposed to protect, to a certain extent, the right of the peasantry.—Bright's Hungary, p. 114. Appendix IV.

gation. Their time and their persons being thus abandoned to the will of their superiors, the tenantry had no means of resisting further encroachments. One of the most general seems to have been the establishment of a right by which the landlord, providing the serf with subsistence, might withdraw him altogether from the soil on which he had placed him, to employ him elsewhere at pleasure. Then followed an understanding that the flight of a serf from the estate of his landlord, employer, and judge, was an offence and an injury. This once sanctioned by law and usage, the chains of the serf were riveted, and he became a slave, the property of a master. In Russia he is so still: but successive modifications have everywhere else reendowed him with at least some of the privileges of a freeman.

The descent of the peasants towards actual servitude did not perhaps, in every case, follow the precise track here marked out. The nations with whom labour rents originated in Europe were familiar with domestic slavery before they resorted to agriculture for subsistence, and some of their first tenants were doubtless already slaves. But when we observe, not a portion of the people in a state of slavery, but the whole body of peasantry in a wholly agricultural nation, as in Russia, and formerly in Hungary, it is then impossible not to believe that such extensive servitude has closed gradually round their race. The Russians themselves contend that the bondage of their peasantry was not complete till so late as the reign of Czar Boris Godounoff, who mounted the throne in 1603.*

* General Boltin was encouraged by Catharine II. to publish (in

In the Georgian provinces of Russia the owner receives from the peasants a mixture of produce rents and labour: they work for him only one day in the week instead of three, and pay one-seventh of the crops raised on their allotments.* With this and perhaps other local exceptions, the body of Russian serfs who are actual cultivators pay labour rents nominally at the rate of three days' labour in the week for their allotments, but in fact their condition has degenerated into a state of complete personal bondage, and the demands of the proprietor, though influenced by custom, are really limited only by his own forbearance. The money commutation of these labour rents, when they are permitted to make one, which they very generally are, is called, like the payments from the personal slaves, obroc or abroc, and is completely arbitrary, and settled by the master according to his suspicions of their ability.†

Russia) some researches on the origin of slavery in Russia, and as such was his conclusion it rests certainly on no mean authority. Before the time of Boris Godounoff, General Boltin asserts that the only real slaves in Russia were prisoners taken from an enemy, and that the peasants were reduced to slavery (asservis) after that epoch. Storch, Vol. VI., p. 310.

* See Gamba, Voy. dans. la Russ., Tom. II., p. 84.

† Heber (late Bishop of Calcutta) quoted by Clarke, Travels, Vol. I., p. 165. The peasants belonging to the nobles have their abrock regulated by their means of getting money; at an average throughout the empire of eight or ten roubles. It then becomes not a rent for land, but a downright tax on their industry. Each male peasant is obliged by law to labour three days in each week for his proprietor. This law takes effect on his arriving at the age of fifteen. If the proprietor chooses to employ him on the other days he may; as, for example, in a manufactory; but he then finds him in food and clothing. Mutual advantage however generally relaxes this law; and excepting such as are selected for domestic servants, or, as

But even in Russia the bondage of the serfs, although more entire than elsewhere, is yet, as respects a large body, perhaps half of the peasantry, in a state of rapid change. That change has originated with the government. The existence of very extensive crown domains may perhaps be considered as an indication of a backward state of civilization. In other parts of Europe they will usually be found small in proportion to the advance of the people in wealth and numbers. The domains of the Russian sovereign are immense, and perhaps more than equal the estates of all his subjects. This fact is indicated by the number of royal serfs: of these, in 1782, ten millions and a half belonged to the crown. To extract labour rents from such a body of people, that is, to employ them, as they are employed by subjects, in raising produce for the benefit, and under the superintendence, of their owner, was a work clearly beyond the administrative capacity of any government. Induced therefore partly by the necessity of the case, partly, we may believe, by a wise policy, the Russian government has attempted to establish on the crown domains a different system of cultivation, including an almost total abolition of labour rents, and a voluntary and very considerable modification of the sovereign's power, as owner of the serfs. The villages inhabited by the peasants of the crown have been formed into a sort of corporations; the surrounding lands are cultivated by them at a very moderate fixed rent or

above, are employed in manufactories, the slave pays a certain abrock or rent, to be allowed to work all the week on his account. The master is bound to furnish him with a house and a certain portion of land.

abroc: the serfs may securely acquire for themselves and transmit to others personal property, and what is a more important privilege, and one not always conceded to their class in neighbouring countries of more liberal institutions (in Hungary for instance), they may purchase or inherit land.* In the tribunals instituted especially for the management of their corporations, two peasants, chosen by the body, have a seat and voice with the officers of the emperor.† But the right to their personal services has not been wholly abandoned. The serf is so far attached to the soil as to be forbidden to leave his village unless with a special licence, which is only granted, when granted at all, for a limited term. The Russian monarchs have manufactures and mines conducted on their own account. The serfs on the crown lands are still liable to be taken from their homes and employed on these. They are hired out occasionally to the owners of such similar establishments as it is thought politic to encourage; and in some of the foreign provinces *united* to Russia, though not lately, it should seem, in Russia proper, they are liable to be sold, or to be given away, or granted with the soil for a term, to individuals whom the court wishes to enrich. Could this large portion of the population of the empire be thoroughly emancipated, completely freed from oppression, and enabled to collect and preserve

* This privilege was given in 1801, and in 1810 the peasants of the crown had purchased lands to the value of two millions of roubles in bank assignations. During the same period, all the other classes (not being noble) had only purchased to the amount of 3,611,000 roubles in the same paper-money.

† For a more detailed account of these alterations, see Storch, Vol. VI., Note xix., p. 266.

capital, Russia would soon have a third estate and an efficient body of cultivators, fitted gradually to bring into action her great territorial resources. The tenants on the royal domains already appear to be, on the whole,* in a condition superior to that of the serfs of individuals, but the progress of their improvement is retarded by causes not likely soon to lose their influence. However earnestly the Emperors of Russia may shake off the character of owners of slaves, they will evidently be obliged for some generations to retain that of despots, and there is some danger that the ordinary defects of their form of government will mar their really humane efforts as landed proprietors. The officers of the Russian government are proverbially ill paid; oppression and extortion still afflict the peasantry, and the condition of the serfs of the crown is sometimes even worse than that of the slaves of the neighbouring nobility.†

In the mean time, the insensibility for which the body of the Russian peasantry have been renowned seems to be giving way. Soon after the accession of the present Emperor, many of the tenants of the crown refused to pay their abrock or rents, and the serfs of individuals to perform their accustomed labour. A proclamation appeared, reproaching them with entertaining unreasonable expectations of being released from rents and services altogether, and threatening them, in a style which it must be confessed is truly oriental, with severe punishment if they even petitioned the Czar on such subjects again. But we must not judge the conduct of the Russian court by the harsh language of a proclam-

* Storch, Vol. IV., p. 299. † Ibid., p. 296.

ation issued on such an emergency. The spirit in which the Czars have dealt with their serfs has hitherto been evidently paternal. The form of their government is theoretically bad; but Russia offers at present no materials for forming any not likely to be worse, and the gradual improvement in the condition of such a people, however slowly we see it proceed, is probably, after all, safer in the hands of the monarch than it would be in their own, or in those of their masters the nobles.

SECTION III.

ON LABOUR RENTS IN HUNGARY.

In Hungary, the nobles alone are allowed to become the proprietors of land, either by inheritance or purchase. They constitute about one part in twenty-one of a population of eight millions.* Of the other inhabitants, a great majority are peasants; for in 1777 there were only 30,921 artizans in Hungary, and their number is said to be not much increased.† These peasants occupy about half the cultivated surface of the country,‡ and all pay labour rents.

Till the reign of Maria Theresa, their situation was nearly similar to that of the Russian serf. They

* Bright's Hungary, p. 110. The population of Hungary amounts by the last returns to nearly ten millions.

† In the year 1777 the whole number of handicraftsmen, their servants, and apprentices, in Hungary, amounted to 30,921; and this number does not seem, by more recent partial calculations, to have been much increased.—Bright, p. 205.

‡ Ibid., p. 113.

were all attached to the estates on which they were born, and subjected to services and payments wholly indefinite. That Princess set the example of an earnest attempt to elevate their character, and improve their circumstances; and the example has been followed in the neighbouring countries with zeal certainly, if not always with judgment or success. The results of her own efforts were extremely imperfect, and not always free from mischief: but it must be remembered, that those efforts were much cramped by the influence which the Hungarian constitution enabled the proprietors to exercise in thwarting or modifying her measures for the emancipation of their tenantry.

By an edict of hers, which the Hungarians call the Urbarium, personal slavery and attachment to the soil were abolished, and the peasants declared to be "*homines liberæ transmigrationis*." On the other hand, they were declared mere tenants at will, whom the lord at his pleasure might dismiss from the estate. But an interest in the soil, though denied to them as individuals, was attempted to be secured to them as a body. The lands on each estate, before allotted to the maintenance of serfs, were declared to be legally consecrated to that purpose for ever. They were divided into portions of from 35 to 40 English acres each, called Sessions.* The quantity of labour due to the proprietor for each session was fixed at 104 days per annum.†

* The size of these sessions seems to have differed in different parts of Hungary, probably in proportion to the fertility of the soil.

† Besides this he must give four fowls, twelve eggs, and a pfund and a half of butter; and every thirty peasants must give one calf yearly. He must also pay a florin for his house; must cut and bring home a klafter of wood; must spin in his family six pfund of wool

The proprietor might divide these sessions, and grant any minute portion of them he pleased to a peasant; but he could stipulate for labour only in proportion to the size of the holding: for half a session 52 days, for a quarter 26 days, and so proportionably for smaller quantities.

The Urbarium of Maria Theresa still continues the Magna Charta of the Hungarian serfs. But the authority of the owners of the soil over the persons and fortunes of their tenantry has been very imperfectly abrogated: the necessities of the peasants oblige them frequently to resort to their landlords for loans of food; they become laden with heavy debts to be discharged by labour. A long list of customary payments of flax, poultry, &c., are still due, which swell this account: the proprietors retain the right of employing them at pleasure; paying them, in lieu of subsistence, about one-third of the actual value of their labour:* and lastly, the administration of justice is still in the hands of the nobles;† and one of the first sights which strike a foreigner on approaching their mansions is a sort of low frame-work of posts, to which a serf is tied when it is thought proper to administer the discipline of the whip, for offences which do not seem grave enough to demand a formal trial.‡

But while the regulations of the Urbarium have

or hemp, provided by the landlord: and among four peasants, the proprietor claims what is called a long journey, that is, they must transport twenty centners, each one hundred French pounds' weight, the distance of two days' journey out and home: and besides all this, they must pay one-tenth of all their products to the church, and one-ninth to the lord.

* Bright, p. 115.

† Storch, Vol. vi., p. 308. Bright. ‡ See Bright.

secured thus imperfectly the interests and liberty of the peasant, they are extremely embarrassing to the proprietors. A part of each estate is irrevocably devoted to the maintenance of the labourers, and that not fixed in reference to its extent and wants, but decided by the number of peasants who happened to be on it at the time of the edict. On some estates, as might be expected, the sessions devoted to the peasantry maintain more labourers than are now wanted. The labour rents, to that extent, are worth nothing to the proprietor, and unless he has an adjacent estate to employ the serfs upon, he gets nothing but the flax, poultry, and small produce payments to which they are liable. Some estates are wholly occupied by useless labourers; on others there are too few; and from the many ties which still connect the serf and his landlord, an interchange between different proprietors is rare, while from the unwillingness of the peasants to quit their hold, such as it is, upon the soil, free labour is still more so. All this part of the arrangement is evidently clumsy and inexpedient: it is probable it originated in a compromise between the wish of the Empress to secure the peasants some interest in the soil, and the dislike of the nobles to establish the independence of their serfs. The diet only confirmed the Urbarium at first provisionally, till something better could be devised.* It appears from Schmalz, that similar attempts on the part of the sovereign, to secure to the peasants, as a body, the occupation of any land once cultivated by them, were common throughout Germany, and originated in the exemption of the lands culti-

* Storch, Vol. VI., p. 308.

vated by the nobles from direct taxation: when land once got into the hands of the peasant, it was available to the public revenue: hence many laws existed in different states, which forbade its resumption by the proprietor, without securing a definite interest in it to any individual tenant. Such laws necessarily created complicated and anomalous interests in the soil, and in many instances left in no hands any authority over it which could be a sufficient basis for the most obvious improvements.*

Such a system, however, as established by the Urbarium is still nearly universal throughout Hungary, and there is little immediate prospect of a change.

SECTION IV.

ON LABOUR RENTS IN POLAND.

THE Polish serfs, before the partition, seem to have been in a condition very similar to that of those of Hungary before the edict of Maria Theresa, differing little, if at all, from that of the Russian slave;†

* Schmalz, Econ. Polit. (French translation, Vol. II., p. 109). Sans doute, ce sont les proprietaires eux-mêmes, qui ont donné lieu à la defense qui leur a été faite de reprendre leurs fermes des mains de leur paysans, parce qu'ils ont cherché, et qu'ils sont parvenus, à se faire dégrever des impôts que les paysans paient à l'état, et qu'en conséquence, l'état a intérêt à s'opposer à ce que les fermes ou métairies ne soient pas reunies au bien noble du seigneur foncier, et affranchies par là de la perception de l'impot.

† Till the reign of Casimir the Great, about the middle of the 14th century, the Polish nobles exercised over their peasants the uncontrolled power of life and death. Three days' labour was their usual rent.—*Burnett's View of Present State of Poland*, p. 102.

but from the dark fate of Poland, the system of labour rents now presents itself, in different parts of what once formed that kingdom, under a considerable variety of modifications. In the portions seized by the partitioning powers, the arrangements between landlord and tenant have been influenced by the very different measures adopted by each in their own dominions; while in what may now be called Poland proper, which became a Russian province at a later date, a system has arisen which is peculiar to it.

When, in 1791, Stanislaus Augustus and the States were preparing a hopeless resistance to the threatened attack of Russia, a new constitution, adopted too late, established the complete personal freedom of the peasantry. This boon has never been recalled. But this constitution did no more for them: it secured them no interest in the land they occupied: it did not even stipulate, like the Hungarian regulations, that a definite portion of the soil should be unalienably devoted to the maintenance of their class; but it left them to arrange their contracts with the landowners as they could. Finding that their dependence on the proprietors for subsistence remained undiminished, the peasants showed no very grateful sense of the boon bestowed upon them: they feared that they should now be deprived of all claim upon the proprietors for assistance, when calamity or infirmity overtook them. This loss they thought more than balanced the value of an increase, to them at first merely nominal, in their political rights. It is only since they have discovered that the connection between them and the owners of the estates on which they reside

is little altered in practice, and that their old masters very generally continue, from expediency or humanity, the occasional aid they formerly lent them, that they have become reconciled to their new character of freemen.

But although bestowed upon a people so far sunk as to be ignorant of its value, the gift of freedom has already developed its importance among them. Since the date of the emancipation of the Polish peasantry, another alteration in the laws has taken away the exclusive right of the nobles to be possessors of the soil, and introduced a new class of proprietors. These have been, on the whole, more diligent in pushing cultivation than their predecessors on their estates, and their enterprises have already created an increased demand for labour. The effects of this have shown themselves in the only manner in which, in a country so occupied and so cultivated, they could show themselves, in increased wages, obtained by increased allotments of land granted on the reserve of less labour, and with every encouragement to the peasantry to use their freedom, and migrate to the estates on which their labour is most wanted.*

* See Mr. Jacob's First Report, p. 27. The Appendix to this Report contains some detailed returns from the managers of Polish estates, and, taken with Mr. Bright's book, presents a perfect picture of the practical working of the system of labour-rents in Poland and in Hungary. For a graphic sketch of the state of manners and morals it has produced, the reader may consult Burnett. In Poland, in Austria, and other parts of Germany, the proprietor's domain, with his implements, animals, and capital of all sorts, are sometimes let at a low money-rent to a tenant, together with the right of exacting and using the labour due from the serfs. The superior tenant is, in Poland, very often a younger branch of the family, occasionally a stranger. This substitution of another person as cultivator of the

SECTION V.

ON LABOUR RENTS IN LIVONIA AND ESTHONIA.

THE state of the peasantry in Livonia is remarkable, because it presents the results of a deliberate experiment on the best means of gradually converting a serf tenantry into a race of freemen.

Till the reign of Alexander the condition of the Livonian peasantry was similar to that of the Russian slave. The servile condition of the cultivators had attracted some attention under the Empress Catherine, and she had encouraged the men of letters in her dominions to communicate their ideas on the best means of gradually modifying it. M. de Boltin, M. de Kaïsarof, and M. de Stroïnovsky, successively wrote upon the subject. The work of the last, written in Polish, was translated into Russian: it entered into a detailed account of the measures proper to prepare and forward what was treated as a great and useful reform. Nor were these notions confined to literary men, or to individuals. In 1805 the whole body of proprietors in Esthonia agreed among themselves on some preliminary regulations for the peasantry on their estates, which, it was avowed, were meant to pave the way

domain, leaves, however, the labour rents of the serfs (our present object) precisely where they were. It is considered a very disastrous mode of disposing of the domain: the stock and capital are usually, as might be expected, ruined at the expiration of the lease; it is not now practised extensively; though it appears from Mr. Jacob's Second Report to be now spreading in the north-west of Germany. It may, however, possibly prove hereafter one stepping-stone to a different system; and if the dilapidation of the stock could be effectually guarded against, it most probably would do so.

to their ultimate emancipation. These regulations received a formal sanction from the Emperor. The alterations in Livonia began a year earlier, and seem to have originated in minds equally alive to the importance of a change, and to the practical reasons for its being effected gradually. Their object appears to have been to elevate the serf by degrees, and, while that elevation was in progress, to retain considerable control over him, partly for his own advantage, partly to secure the interests of the proprietors. The personal liberty at first conceded to the peasant was much less complete than that of the Hungarian and Pole, for he was still attached to the glebe, and had no power of choosing his employment or residence. But a benefit was bestowed more important in the outset than freedom itself to persons so wholly dependent on the soil for subsistence; a benefit which had been withheld from him in Hungary and Poland: every individual peasant was invested with a secure interest in the allotment of land which he cultivated.

The edict of the Emperor finally legalising these regulations appeared in 1804. The Livonian serf was declared the hereditary farmer of the land he occupied. The rent was fixed in labour, to be performed on the domain of the proprietor. It was to leave the peasant master of at least two-thirds of his time. If this labour rent should at any time be commuted for a money-payment, the amount of that payment was limited and fixed, and it was never to be increased. A lease was to be granted on these terms, irrevocable, and only subject to forfeiture in case the rent should be two years in arrear; and then only after the decision of a legal

tribunal, which was to direct the lease to be renewed to the next heir of the defaulter. Some rights of cutting both firewood and timber for building, in the proprietor's forests, were also reserved to the serf. He was enabled to acquire property in moveables or land, and to *marry at his own discretion.*

With all these privileges, however, he remains attached to the soil. He can no longer be sold away from it, but he is sold with it, or rather the benefits arising from his compulsory occupation of his allotment are sold with the rest of the estate: he is subject to a correctional discipline of fifteen lashes.

On the whole, these regulations do credit to the good feelings and good sense of the framers of them. The emancipation of the serf is incomplete; but it would have been evidently rash to have abandoned at once all control over the industry of so rude a race; on whose exertions the subsistence of the proprietors themselves, and the whole cultivation of the country, must for some time depend.* The successful results to be looked for from such an experiment could not be expected to appear at once; but it is unpleasant to observe the little effect apparently produced in fifteen years. Von Halen, who travelled through Livonia in 1819, observes: "Along the high road through Livonia are found at short distances filthy public-houses, called in the country Rhartcharuas, before the doors of which are usually seen a multitude of wretched carts and sledges belonging to the peasants, who are so greatly addicted to brandy and strong liquors, that they

* For an instance of the bad results of a benevolent but ill-judged attempt at a hasty and complete emancipation, see Burnett, p. 106.

spend whole hours in those places without paying the least regard to their horses, which they leave thus exposed to the inclemency of the weather, and which, with themselves, belong to the gentlemen or noblemen of the country. Nothing proves so much the state of barbarism in which these men are sunk, as the manner in which they received the decree issued about this time. These savages, unwilling to depend upon their own exertions for support, made all the resistance in their power to that decree, the execution of which was at length entrusted to an armed force."* *

The Livonian peasants, therefore, received their new privileges yet more ungraciously than the Poles, though accompanied with the gift of property, and secure means of subsistence if they chose to exert themselves. Subsequently their discontent appears to have taken a different turn. They are said to have constituted a part of the peasantry against whom that edict of the Emperor Nicholas was directed, which accuses the serfs of wishing to throw off all rents and services at once.

SECTION VI.

OF LABOUR RENTS IN GERMANY.

WE shall understand better the present state of labour rents in Germany, if we previously recall to mind the downward progress of similar systems in

* Narrative of Don Juan Von Halen, &c., Vol. II., p. 38. Don Juan was mistaken as to the date of the decree, which had been issued since 1804 by the Emperor Alexander, for partly emancipating some of the Livonian serfs.

other countries from which they have disappeared gradually; because we shall then see distinctly the successive steps of that slow demolition, the progress of which, Germany now in its different parts exhibits in many various stages.

We may take England for such a previous instance. Thirteen hundred years have elapsed since the final establishment of the Saxons. Eight hundred of these had passed away and the Normans had been for two centuries settled here, and a very large proportion of the body of cultivators was still precisely in the situation of the Russian serf.* During the next three hundred, the unlimited labour rents paid by the villeins for the lands allotted to them were gradually commuted for definite services, still payable in kind; and they had a legal right to the hereditary occupation of their copyholds. Two hundred years have barely elapsed since the change to this extent became quite universal, or since the personal bondage of the villeins ceased to exist among us. The last claim of villenage recorded in our courts was in the 15th of James I., 1618. Instances probably existed some time after this. The ultimate cessation of the right to demand their stipulated services in kind has been since brought about, silently and imperceptibly, not by positive law; for, when other personal services were abolished at the Restoration, those of copyholders were excepted and reserved.†

Throughout Germany similar changes are now taking place on the land; they are perfected perhaps nowhere, and in some large districts they

* Eden, Vol. I., p. 7. Appendix V.

† See 12th Charles II., c. 24.

exhibit themselves in very backward stages. A short description of the condition of one state will make that of others intelligible; allowance must of course be made for an indefinite variety of modifications in the practice and phraseology of different districts.

The domain lands, those which in Hungary, Poland, and many German states are still cultivated by the nobles themselves, are generally in Hanover let for a money rent to persons who occupy the domain as a farm, and have the benefit of the services which the peasant tenants are bound to perform. Some of these larger tenants, under the name of Amtmen, exercise the important territorial jurisdiction still invested in the nobles, and kept alive and distinct even on the demesnal possessions of the crown.* The amtmen are not usually practical farmers themselves, but lawyers or officers of government, the only classes which seem to possess capital for such undertakings. They reside sometimes in towns, and employ stewards or bailiffs to look after their very large farms.† These stewards are the best practical farmers in Germany, are usually well educated (often in the agricultural institutions); and are inferior in general and professional knowledge to no set of cultivators in the world.

It would be well for the strength and prosperity of Germany if its soil were universally under such management. But by far the larger proportion, it has been loosely said four-fifths, is occupied by a class of men called collectively Bauers. These,

* Hodgskin, Vol. II., p. 5. "The Amtman frequently unites," &c.
† Hodgskin, Vol. II., p. 90.

under another name, are the serfs who in Poland, Hungary, and Russia, form the labouring tenantry of the nobles. When the laws are recollected (passed as before remarked for fiscal purposes) which in many German states forbade the cultivation by the proprietor of any land which had once been in the hands of a bauer, the spread of this order and the proportion of the land occupied by them will not appear extraordinary. In some parts of Hanover these men now present themselves in two distinct classes, with a variety of subdivisions. They are called Leibeigeners and Meyers. The leibeigeners are in the state of the English villein, when his labour rent had ceased to be arbitrary, but was still paid in kind, after his hereditary claim to his allotment had been recognized. The leibeigener pays a labour rent, in kind, and cultivates the lands of the landlord for a certain number of days in the year; brings home the lord's wood, performs other services when called upon, and is subjected to some most burthensome and vexatious restrictions as to the mode of cropping his land, which must be so arranged as to leave one-third always in fallow, for the proprietor's flocks to range over. But still the conditions on which he holds the land are fixed; and it descends to his children. He is much in the position in which the Livonian proprietors have lately placed their serf tenants, except that he is not tied to the soil.

The meyer tenant is a bauer whose labour rents have been commuted for money or a corn rent, and in some cases for a definite portion of the crops: though he is still liable to some trifling services. The proprietor cannot raise the rent, nor can he

refuse to renew the lease, unless the heir be an idiot, or the rent in arrear: but as this tenure in many instances is modern, the rent often amounts to nearly the full value of the land. This tenure is gradually displacing that of the leibeigeners, and the tenant under it is much in the position of the English copyholder when he had ceased to perform services in kind, and before his quit rents had become a mere nominal payment. The meyer pays a fine on alienation.

In some cases the whole of an estate is occupied by meyers and leibeigeners, and the proprietor has no domain land at all.

The bauers throughout Germany are nearly all free: chained by many ties to the soil, they are no longer the property of its proprietors, or legally confined to the spot they cultivate. But they have gained this freedom, not, as in England, by the gradual wearing out of their chains, but by the determined exertion of their sovereigns. A woman, Sophia Magdalena, of Denmark, gave, in 1761, one of the earliest examples of this spirit. Between 1770 and 1790, it was followed by the Margrave of Baden and other minor princes. In 1781, Joseph II. abolished slavery in the German dominions of Austria. Since 1810 it has ceased in Prussia, and very lately in Mecklenburg.*

The higher classes have partaken largely for many generations of the general civilization of Europe. To their loathing at the degraded condition of their inferiors, the latter owe an emancipation from personal thraldom, of which in some cases they hardly yet feel the full value. At the moment

* Schmalz, Vol. I., p. 104.

in which they became free men they become in some instances small proprietors, subject to a perpetual rent charge. To their forcible investment with this character in Prussia we shall hereafter have occasion to advert.

SECTION VII.

HAVING now traced the system of labour rents from Russia to the Rhine,* we may quit it. Fragments of it indeed still subsist to the westward of the Rhine; the relics for the most part of a storm and inundation which have passed over and away; but they are thinly scattered, and cease to give any peculiar form and complexion to the relations between the different orders of society.

Of these fragments, however, one of the most interesting to us subsists, under a very primitive form, in a corner of our own island. In the northern Highlands, the chief seems never to have been able to introduce either produce or money rents, exclusively, that is, to trust his people with the task of producing subsistence for himself and his households. Each chief therefore kept in his hands a considerable domain; the remainder of his country was parcelled out among the tacksmen or inferior gentry of the clan, and these again divided it among a race of tenants, who paid a large proportion of the stipulated rent in labour, poultry, eggs, and articles of domestic produce, exactly similar to those which form a part of the dues of the Hunga-

* On the very poor soils in the German provinces west of the Rhine labour rents still, I am told, prevail.

rian peasant. In their rent rolls, *servitude* is included as a prominent and important article. The interest of the proprietors has led them, since 1745, to substitute for this race of tenantry extensive sheep farmers. The cultivation of the old tenantry appears to have been slothful, ignorant, and inefficient, and their situation extremely miserable: but still these northern serfs, whose spirit had never been subdued by personal bondage, clung fondly to their homes, and have been removed, we know, only by a difficult and painful process.

The agent of the Marquis of Stafford has published an account of the changes now taking place in Sutherland, which contains a very interesting picture of the habits, character, and circumstances this system had produced there.* Its last relics are however fast wearing away, and when a few leases to existing tacksmen have expired, labour rents will finally disappear from Great Britain.

It has been common to speak of the services due from serfs throughout Europe as feudal services, and of the relation between them and the proprietors as part of the feudal system. This is by no means correct. The feudal ties originated in a plan of military defence, made necessary by the circumstances, and congenial to the habits, of the barbarians who had quartered themselves in Western Europe. The granter of a feud deliberately di-

* Those who wish thoroughly to understand the spirit and effects of the old Highland modes of dividing and cultivating the soil, and the consequences of the violent change effected since 1745, may consult the work of Lord Selkirk, published in 1805, entitled 'Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland, with a View of the Causes and probable Consequences of Emigration;' it will be found able, interesting, and instructive.

vested himself, on certain specified conditions, of all right to the possession of the land which he abandoned to his vassal. The object in labour rents was produce alone: they arose in Europe, as in the Society Islands, from a mode of cultivation which the rudeness of the people made necessary, if any rent at all was to be exacted from them: and the proprietor never deliberately divested himself of the right of resuming, at his pleasure, the possession of the allotments occupied by his serfs; though usage and prescription permitted, in the course of ages, a claim to hereditary occupation on their part to establish itself. The feudal system, with its scheme of military service, and nicely graduated scale of fealty and limited obedience, never made much way to the east of Prussia. But it is precisely in those eastern parts of Europe that labour rents have prevailed the most widely and the longest. It would not indeed be difficult to show, were this the place for it, that the multiplication of the feudal vassals, who were freemen by virtue of their tenure and their swords, prevented labour rents from ever prevailing so exclusively over the surface of western Europe as they have always prevailed, and do now prevail, over its eastern division.

SECTION VIII.

SUMMARY OF SERF RENTS.

We have observed serf rents, in the different countries in which they still prevail, and as they

have been variously affected by time and circumstances. It will be convenient, perhaps, to recall in a short summary the most marked features common to the system in all its modifications, and to collect into one view the general principles suggested by the facts to which we have referred. This plan we shall pursue with the other divisions of peasant rents, as we successively arrive at them.

DEPENDENCE OF WAGES ON RENTS.

The most marked feature of a system of serf rents is one which it has in common with all the forms of peasant rents; and that is, the strict connection it creates between the wages of labour and rents. The serfs constitute the great body of labourers in eastern Europe. The real wages of the serf, the wealth he annually consumes, depend on what he is able to extract from his allotment of land; and this again depends, partly on its extent and fertility, partly on the culture he is able to bestow upon it. But the labour he can exert for his own purposes is limited by that which he yields as a rent to his landlord. This varies of course in different countries, and occasionally from time to time in the same country, sometimes directly and avowedly, sometimes indirectly and almost insensibly. Thus in Hungary the number of days' labour nominally due from the peasants for each session of land is doubled in practice by the commutation into labour of many other dues, all trifling, and some very indefinite. In most places, too, the authority of the landlord enables him, at very inadequate prices, to command, in addition to the labour

formally due to him, as much of the peasant's time and exertions as he pleases. Where claims upon his time are thus multiplied, the ground of the serf must be imperfectly tilled, and after a certain point, with each advance in the exactions of the landlord, the produce of the peasant's allotment, his real wages, must become less.

To understand, then, the condition of the serf labourers and the causes which determine the actual amount of their wages, a detailed account is necessary of their contract with the proprietors, and of the manner in which that contract is practically interpreted and enforced. This active influence of the nature and amount of the rents they pay on the revenues and condition of the labouring class is one of the most important effects of the existence of a system of labour rents. We shall find however the same effect, produced in a somewhat different manner, characterizing peasant rents in all their forms.

INEFFICIENCY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR.

The next prominent feature of a system of labour or serf rents is peculiar to that form of tenancy: it is, its singular effect in degrading the industrious habits of the labourers, and making them inefficient instruments of cultivation.

The peasant who depends for his food upon his labour in his own allotment of ground, and is yet liable to be called away at the discretion and convenience of another person to work upon other lands, in the produce of which he is not to share, is naturally a reluctant labourer. When long prescription has engendered a feeling that he is a co-proprietor,

at least, in the spot of ground which he occupies, then this reluctance to be called from the care of it to perform his task of forced labour elsewhere is heightened by a vague sense of oppression, and becomes more dogged and sullen. From such men, who have no motive for exertion but the fear of the lash, strenuous labour is not to be expected. Accordingly, the exceeding worthlessness of serf labour is beginning to be thoroughly understood in all those parts of Europe in which it prevails.

The Russians, or rather those German writers who have observed the manners and habits of Russia, state some strong facts on this point. Two Middlesex mowers, they say, will mow in a day as much grass as six Russian serfs; and in spite of the dearness of provisions in England, and their cheapness in Russia, the mowing a quantity of hay which would cost an English farmer half a copeck will cost a Russian proprietor three or four copecks.* The Prussian counsellor of state Jacob is considered to have proved, that in Russia, where everything is cheap, the labour of a serf is doubly as expensive as that of a labourer in England.† Mr. Schmalz gives a startling account of the unproductiveness of serf labour in Prussia, from his own knowledge and observation.‡ In Austria, it is distinctly stated, that the labour of a serf is equal to only one-third of that of a free hired labourer. This calculation, made in an able work on Agriculture (with some extracts from which I have been favoured), is applied to the practical purpose of deciding on the number of labourers necessary to cultivate an estate

* Schmalz, Economie Polit. French translation, Vol. i. p. 66.
† Schmalz, Vol. ii. p. 103. ‡ Vol. ii. p. 107.

of a given magnitude. So palpable indeed are the ill effects of labour rents on the industry of the agricultural population, that in Austria itself, where proposals for changes of any kind do not readily make their way, schemes and plans for the commutation of labour rents are as popular as in the more stirring German provinces of the north.

Labour rents have another bad effect on the national industry: the indolence and carelessness of the serfs are apt to corrupt the free labourers who may come in contact with them. "The existence "of forced labour," says Schmalz, who lived in the midst of it, "habituates men to indolence; every-"where the work done by forced labour is ill done: "wherever it prevails, day labourers and even do-"mestic servants perform their work ill."* A striking example of the mischievous influence of the habits formed by these labour rents occurred lately in the north of Germany. A new road is at this time making, which is to connect Hamburgh and the Elbe with Berlin; it passes over the sterile sands of which so much of the north of Germany consists, and the materials for it are supplied by those isolated blocks of granite, of which the presence on the surface of those sands forms a notorious geological puzzle. These blocks, transported to the line of road, are broken to the proper size by workmen, some of whom are Prussian free labourers, others leibeigeners of the Mecklenburg territory, through a part of which the road passes. They are paid a stipulated sum for breaking a certain quantity, and all are paid alike. Yet the leibeigeners could not at first be prevailed upon

* Schmalz, Vol. ii. p. 107.

to break more than one-third of the quantity which formed the ordinary task of the Prussians. The men were mixed, in the hope that the example and the gains of the more industrious would animate the sluggish. A contrary effect followed: the leibeigeners did not improve, but the exertions of the other labourers sensibly slackened, and at the time my informant (the English engineer who superintended the road) was speaking to me, the men were again at work in separate gangs, carefully kept asunder.

In Prussia, before 1811, two-thirds of the whole population consisted of leibeigeners, or of an enslaved serf tenantry, in a yet more backward state.* In other parts of eastern and northern Europe similar classes compose a yet larger proportion of the people. Upon their hands, either as principals or as the most essential instruments, rests the task of making the soil productive, the only species of industry yet carried on to any great extent. The inefficiency of this large portion of the productive labourers of the community, their dislike to steady exertions when working for others, their want of skill, means, and energy when employed on their own allotments, must have a disastrous influence on the annual produce of the land and labour of their territory, and tend to keep their country in a state of comparative poverty and political feebleness; which great extent, and the cheapness of human labour and life for military purposes, have only partially balanced.

* Jacob's Germany, p. 235.

INEFFICIENT SUPERINTENDENCE OF LABOUR.

The next peculiarity of a system of labour rents very considerably aggravates the bad effects of that inefficiency which seems the inseparable characteristic of the labour of serfs. This peculiarity is the lax superintendence, the imperfect assistance of the landed proprietors, who are necessarily, in their character of cultivators of their own domains, the only guides and directors of the industry of the agricultural population.

The Russian, Polish, Hungarian, or German nobles, elevated, when not corrupted, by the privileges and habits of their order, have seldom inclination to bestow attention on the detail of the labours of husbandry, and perhaps yet more seldom the means of saving capital and using it.* Seed produced from the estate is sown by the labour of the tenants, who, in due time, gather the harvest into the barns of the proprietor. This process is repeated in a slovenly manner, till the land is exceedingly impoverished,† and is continued while there is a prospect of the smallest gain. These operations are contrived and directed as clumsily and negligently as they are executed.

There are exceptions, no doubt: a few individual proprietors devote themselves with zeal to the improvement of agriculture. This may always be

* The Russian government, hoping to remedy this last defect, established a bank for the express purpose of advancing loans to the nobles to be employed in improving the cultivation of their estates. The experiment did not succeed. The nobles were observed to grow suddenly more expensive, but their estates remained as they were. Storch, Vol. iv. p. 288.

† Jacob's First Report.

expected. When a similar race of tenantry occupied England, Robert de Rulos, the chamberlain of the Conqueror, distinguished himself by improvements which he introduced upon his estates, of sufficient consequence to induce the historians of the age to hand down his name to posterity as a public benefactor. On looking now at the different countries of eastern Europe we shall find a sprinkling of men who are the Robert de Rulos of their day; but it would be hopeless and irrational to expect that a race of noble proprietors, fenced round with privileges and dignity, and attracted to military and political pursuits by the advantages and habits of their station, should ever become attentive cultivators as a body.

There remains for them the expedient of educating and employing able and scientific managers, and on a few of the large estates belonging to rich proprietors this is very carefully and well done. But the training and employing such a class of men is first very expensive, and is then nearly useless, unless they can be supplied freely with capital as the means of carrying into effect the improved systems which they have been taught. These circumstances confine to narrow limits the number of estates conducted by such a description of managers; and, taking large districts only into account, the paucity of mind and skill steadily applied to agriculture, and the poor use which is made of the reluctant labour of the peasantry, furnish another striking feature of the system of cultivation by a serf tenantry.

SMALL NUMBERS OF INDEPENDENT CLASSES.

The two circumstances just pointed out, the indolence of the labourers and the inefficiency of the directors of labour, are causes which make the agricultural produce of countries cultivated by serfs extremely small when compared with their extent. It follows that, even where the whole of the raw produce raised is consumed at home (which from other causes it rarely is), still, after the peasantry have been fed, the numbers of the non-agricultural classes maintained are small.

We have seen that in Prussia two-thirds of the whole population were bauers: in other parts of the east of Europe the numbers of the classes not connected with agriculture are yet smaller, compared with the extent of their territory, or the gross amount of their population. In Hungary we have observed that there were but thirty thousand artizans when there were eight millions of inhabitants, and nowhere does the number of the class which is unconnected with the soil reach the size at which it may be observed in countries cultivated under better systems.

AUTHORITY OF LANDLORDS OVER TENANTS.

Another marked and important effect of a system of labour rents is the constant coercion which is necessary to make it to any extent efficient, and the arbitrary authority this circumstance throws into the hands of the landlords, under any possible modifications of the tenure. We have seen that at one stage of their progress throughout Europe, the serfs have almost universally been at one time actual

slaves. This extreme state of things has indeed changed, except in Russia alone. But the authority of the proprietors over the serfs, exercised through the medium of judicial tribunals, in which the nobles are the judges, has not ceased to be extremely arbitrary. While the system of labour rents exists to any practical purpose, this can hardly be otherwise. While large domains are cultivated by agricultural labour, due from a numerous tenantry, the necessary work must be delayed, embarrassed, and frequently altogether suspended, if a law-suit before independent tribunals were the only mode of settling a dispute with a reluctant or refractory labourer.* Hence the judicial power has rarely, if ever, been abandoned by the proprietors, even where the personal freedom of the serf has been recognized. The Hungarian noble still exercises criminal and civil jurisdiction by his officers. Even in Germany, where the authority of the general government has made more way, and where the system of labour rents is in a more advanced stage of decomposition, the whole country till very recently was covered by domainial tribunals, which were at one time divided and multiplied to such excess, that the jurisdiction of some of them is said to have comprehended only a dwelling-house, and as much ground as is found within the line marked

* See Jacob's Germany, p. 342, for an instance of the manner in which the rights of the proprietors are frustrated when they are by chance driven to the tribunals. The Saxon courts of justice seem to be actuated, when they have an opportunity to interfere between proprietor and tenant, by the same bias towards freedom which did honour to those of England, and seem too to approach their object with much of the astuteness which suggested some of our own legal proceedings.

by the water-drip from the eaves.* On the estates of the sovereign and of large proprietors, this authority is usually administered by the Amtmen who, either as tenants or stewards, have charge of the domain.

In the west of Europe, as in France for instance, the pride of the nobility, and the connivance or indolence of the government, kept these tribunals in existence long after the altered relations of the cultivators and their landlords had made them useless: but in the east of Europe it would really be difficult to dispense with them: and where the sovereigns are alive to the inconvenience of these petty tribunals (which they do not seem always to be), they will hardly venture on depriving the proprietors of all summary authority over their tenantry, while any considerable portion of their territory is made productive by the use of labour rents alone. So naturally does the usefulness of this jurisdiction of the proprietors accompany the existence of labour rents, that I perceive, by the public papers, in some parts of the Danish dominions, where a general commutation of these rents has taken place, the proprietors have made a voluntary offer to the crown of abandoning their judicial authority altogether.

The serf, however, who is liable to have claims upon his time and labour interpreted, and summarily enforced, by the person who makes those claims,

* Hodgskin, Vol. ii. p. 6. In Hanover some of these minute patrimonial courts have been abolished; but there are still, or were so late as 1819, no less than 160 local tribunals on the royal domain, besides all those belonging to individual proprietors and to towns.

can never be more than half a freeman, even when he has ceased to be wholly a slave.

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE ARISTOCRACY.

The subjection of the serfs to the proprietors, under all the modifications of their tenure, throws inevitably great power and influence into the hands of the landed body. The landholders themselves may enjoy very different measures of political freedom. We may observe them, wholly unawed by the crown, exercising the wild licence of the Polish nobility; or, when united with other states under a powerful sovereign, as in the case of Hungary, still able to maintain the privileges of their order with a degree of independence which the government feels it would be impolitic to provoke, even though it were possible to overwhelm it: or we may see them, as in Russia, so circumstanced, that legal bounds to the power of the sovereign are unthought of. Still in all these different cases the power of the aristocracy over the mass of the people creates a moral influence, which must be felt by the general government, and, if not obeyed, must to some extent be attended to. From this influence even the absolute government of the Russian Emperor receives an unacknowledged but powerful check, sufficient to distinguish it from an Asiatic despotism, to insure a wholesome dominion to forms and usages, and to prescribe decency and limits even to caprice and injustice. Amidst the mischiefs incident to this mode of occupying the soil, this political effect must be distinguished as being, when re-acting on a strong general government, the source of benefits to the people which are

important though imperfect. It has for many centuries staved off unlimited despotism from a large portion of Europe.

As the general government becomes feeble, the influence of such an aristocracy may be expected of course to show itself more active and dominant; and then there are doubtless instances of its assuming the form of a national evil.

WANT OF POPULAR INFLUENCE IN THE POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF SUCH COUNTRIES.

The small numbers and small importance of the classes who are independent of the soil, the absence on the soil itself of any class like our farmers, the abject dependence of the serfs on the proprietors, make any real influence of a third estate in the constitution of countries in which labour rents prevail utterly nugatory. The government of such countries must be shared by the sovereign and the aristocracy: it may be shared very unequally; they may control each other in different degrees; but on their joint authority alone the public power must rest. Tracing back the history of our own country, we observe, that while a similar system prevailed in England, the absence of any efficient third estate made our government a rude mixture of monarchy and a landed aristocracy, struggling fiercely, and each threatening to extinguish the other in its turn. It is the very same want of a third estate which makes it so difficult to establish in many continental nations those imitations of the actual English Constitution, which we have seen of late frequently attempted. Before the people of eastern Europe can have governments of which the springs and

weights really resemble those of the English, a space of time must elapse sufficient to introduce very different ingredients into their social elements. Till then, we may expect to see yet more well-meant attempts of sovereigns and nobles end in disappointment. And when society has undergone the necessary change, serf rents, we may venture to predict, will have been superseded, and will have ceased to exist: except perhaps in some obsolete shapes and names, from which, as in the case of the copyholds of England, all life and power have departed.

WHAT DETERMINES THE AMOUNT OF LABOUR RENTS.

The value of serf or labour rents, the advantages which the proprietor derives from the lands allotted to the serfs, depend partly upon the quantity of labour exacted, and partly upon the skill used in applying it. The proprietor, therefore, may increase the rent of the land held by his serfs either by exacting more labour from them, or by using their labour more efficiently.

If more labour is exacted from the serf, he is in fact thrust farther downwards in the scale of comfort and respectability; his exertions become more reluctant, more languid, and inefficient; the proprietor gains little by his increased services; the community gains nothing by the rise of rents; for if the lands held by the proprietors be better tilled by the additional culture bestowed upon them, those held by the serfs must be worse tilled when labour is withdrawn from them. The second mode of increasing the rents of the lands held by the serfs, the using the labour of the tenantry more

skilfully and efficiently, is attended by no disadvantages. It leads to an unquestionable augmentation of the revenues of the nation. The lands held by the proprietors produce more, those held by the serfs do not produce less. But the unfitness of the proprietors, as a body, to advance the science of agriculture, or improve the conduct of its details, makes this mode of increasing the rents derived from the lands which the serfs hold rare. It would be visionary to count upon it as the source of any general improvement in the revenues of the landed class.

A CHANGE FROM LABOUR RENTS TO PRODUCE RENTS ALWAYS DESIRABLE.

The illusory nature of all attempts to increase labour rents by exacting more and more labour from the serfs, and the repugnance of the proprietors, as a body, to the task of increasing their revenue by the better application of the labour due to them, make us conclude that the substitution of produce or money rents is the only step by which the interests of the landlords of serfs can be substantially and permanently promoted. It is impossible to cast an eye on what is passing in the east of Europe without seeing how deeply this is felt by the proprietors themselves. The irksomeness of the task of superintending the operations of agriculture, the uncertainty of their returns, and the burthensome nature of their connection with their tenantry, make them everywhere anxious for a change. To these motives we must add, first, the gradual increase in some districts of the prescrip-

tive rights of the serfs to the hereditary possession of their allotments; which makes them more unmanageable and less profitable tenants: and then the example of western Europe, with which the proprietors of its eastern division are familiarly acquainted; and which presents to them a race of landlords freed from almost all the vexations and embarrassments with which the management of their own estates is encumbered. In the desire of the proprietors for a change, the governments have joined heartily. A wish to extend the authority and protection of the general government over the mass of cultivators, and to increase their efficiency and through that the wealth and financial resources of the state, has led the different sovereigns always to co-operate, and often to take the lead, in putting an end to the personal dependence of the serf, and modifying the terms of his tenure. To these reasons of the sovereigns and landlords, dictated by obvious self-interest, we must add other motives which do honour to their characters and to the age, the existence of which it would be a mere affectation of hard-hearted wisdom to doubt; namely, a paternal desire on the part of sovereigns to elevate the condition, and increase the comforts, of the most numerous class of the human beings committed to their charge; and a philanthropic dislike on the part of the proprietors to be surrounded by a race of wretched dependents, whose degradation and misery reflect discredit on themselves. These feelings have produced the fermentation on the subject of labour rents which is at this moment working throughout the large division of Europe

in which they prevail. From the crown lands in Russia, through Poland,* Hungary, and Germany, there have been within the last century, or are now, plans and schemes on foot either at once or gradually to get rid of the tenure, or greatly to modify its effects, and improve its character; and if the wishes or the authority of the state, or of the proprietors, could abolish the system and substitute a better in its place, it would vanish from the face of Europe. The actual poverty of the serfs, however, and the degradation of their habits of industry, present an insurmountable obstacle to any general change which is to be complete and sudden. In their imperfect civilization and half savage carelessness the necessity originated which forced proprietors themselves to raise the produce on which their families were to subsist. That necessity has not ceased; the tenantry are not yet ripe—in some instances, not riper than they were 1000 years ago—to be entrusted with the responsibility of raising and paying produce rents. But as the past progress and actual circumstances of different districts are found unlike, so their capacity for present change differs in kind and degree. Hence the great variety observable in plans for altering the relations between the serf tenantry and their landlords. Such a variety is exhibited in the Urbarium of Maria Theresa, in the edict by which the views of the Livonian nobility were made

* In the work (several times before quoted) of Mr. Burnett, of Baliol College, Oxford, entitled, '*A View of the Present State of Poland*,' the reader will find some curious details of the state of loathsome moral degradation to which the Polish peasants are reduced. The author was for some time private tutor in a Polish family.

law; in the constitution of Poland, and in the decrees of the sovereigns of smaller districts. The ameliorations produced by these steps are valuable, if, after having worked successfully for some time, they prepare the way for two great measures which are the aim of all parties in a more advanced state of society; that is, first, the general commutation of the revenue derived from the allotments of the serfs into produce rents, and, then, the establishment on the domains held by the proprietors themselves of a race of tenantry able to relieve them from the task of cultivation, and to pay either produce or money rents. But these results are difficult and distant. The manner in which such a change was effected in England is that in which it is most easy and safe. It was the growth of centuries; it took place insensibly: the villeins we know gradually assumed the character of copyholders paying fixed dues, which again were slowly commuted for money: in the mean time, the growth of the free population multiplied the numbers of hired labourers, by whose assistance the proprietors might cultivate their domains without serf labour; and the increase and progressive prosperity of an intermediate class of agricultural capitalists supplied, after a long interval, a race of men fitted to relieve the proprietors from the charge of agriculture altogether, and enabled to pay their rents in money from the increase of internal commerce, and of the market provided by non-agricultural classes for their produce. A process similar to this has been going on in the western part of Germany, though it is yet far indeed from being complete there. The enslaved serf has become a free Leibeigener

with fixed services: the Leibeigener is changing gradually into a meyer, whose services are commuted for produce or money; some few* free labourers exist, and are hired by the proprietors who farm their domains; and of these domains a new race of tenantry are in some instances beginning to take possession, advancing the necessary capital, paying money rents, and discharging the land-owners from all share in the task of cultivation.

In the mean time, it is not surprising that the sovereigns and proprietors of countries further east, who see this process hardly begun amongst themselves, and know that it may take centuries to complete itself, should feel impatient of such delay in the career of their improvement, and determine forcibly to anticipate the slow advance of unpurposed change.

The Prussian government has taken the most decisive and extensive measures in this spirit. Throughout a great part of Prussia the serfs had acquired prescriptive rights, either to the hereditary possession of their allotments, or to the occupation of them for life; rights which, though imperfect, made any marked change difficult. To declare the serfs mere tenants at will would have had the appearance of great harshness, and could not probably have been attempted on a large scale without violence and convulsion. To declare them proprietors of the soil they occupied was not doing justice to the fair claims of the land-owners. The government steered a middle course. In 1811 labour rents to the east of the Elbe were suppressed, and it was decided that the peasants who had acquired an

* They are very few.

hereditary right to their allotments should pay the proprietors a third of the produce: that those who had only a claim to a lifehold possession should pay half the produce: the peasants were to find all capital and to pay all expenses and taxes.*

These rents are heavy: half the produce, the tenants providing capital and paying all expenses, is the heaviest rent known in Europe, with the exception of those paid by the Neapolitan metayers, whose soil will bear no comparison with the Prussian sands, and is in fact unrivalled for productiveness and easy tillage. It is not surprising that some of the serfs should have declined to accede to the arrangement, although it delivered them from a state of virtual† bondage, and guaranteed their right to possession.

Two great objects were sought by this arrangement; the improvement of the condition of the peasantry, and the promotion of good agriculture among the proprietors. Its immediate effects have been to divide the surface of the country between a race of small proprietors subject to a heavy rent charge, and a body of large land-holders farming their own domains. That the condition of the peasants will be at first improved, supposing them not to be weighed down by the rents, is sufficiently clear; their future progress, however, justifies some apprehensions: they are exactly in the condition in

* Different statements have been published as to the terms of this general commutation. Schmalz, however, who was "conseiller intime" of the King of Prussia, and Professor "du droit public" at Berlin, must be considered unquestionable authority. Schmalz, Vol. ii. p. 105.

† Personal bondage had legally ceased to exist from the 10th November, 1810. Schmalz, Vol. ii. p. 103.

which the animal disposition* to increase their numbers is checked by the fewest of those balancing motives and desires which regulate the increase of superior ranks or of more civilized people, and if the too great subdivision of their allotments is not guarded against in time, they will probably, in the course of a very few generations, be more miserable than their ancestors were as serfs, and will certainly be more hopeless and helpless in their misery, since they will have no landlord to resort to. In the mean time, a race of free labourers will doubtless spring up, with whose assistance the proprietors *may* institute a better course of husbandry on their domains, but they will still have to provide capital, attention, and science, and in the two first of these it is to be feared that, as a body, they will always be deficient. More advances must be made by them in money than when they cultivated with the assistance of their serfs, and this circumstance will increase their difficulties and multiply the chances of their failure. After all, the task of cultivation is ungenial to them. Their objects will never be fully attained till a race of tenantry appears, able to advance the necessary capital and undertake for a money rent. These are likely to appear slowly in Prussia, even though they should appear there much less slowly than in some of the surrounding nations. The body of the peasants, it is tolerably evident already, will not grow rich enough to supply them, and they must spring out of the bosom of other classes. The comparative numbers,

* The actual disposition of the population to increase with extreme rapidity shows that these apprehensions are far from fanciful. See Jacob's Second Report.

and therefore joint wealth of these, are small, and the process by which they can become the farmers of all the domains of an extensive country must be slow indeed.

In the mean time, there will be great differences in this respect between different parts of Germany. Amtmen who occupy the land, not as agents, but tenants, are already common in some states: in others almost unknown. Those districts of course will profit the most rapidly and largely by the late changes which were approaching themselves to the condition in which they are now placed, and were provided with some of the elements of a new and better state of things. Those in which the actual changes were prepared by no spontaneous advances will for some time disappoint, it is to be feared, in a great degree, the benevolent impatience of those statesmen who wished to speed them forcibly in paths of improvement which they are not full grown and strong enough to tread steadily.

Leaving however individual instances, and surveying the whole broad mass of labour rents throughout that larger division of Europe in which they still preponderate, either entire, or in different stages of decomposition, it will be sufficiently obvious, that some ages must elapse before those new elements of society are perfected, and that better state of things matured in which this mode of tenure is destined finally to merge. For a long and indefinite period now before us, therefore, the ancient system of serf rents, modified in its forms, but enduring in its effects, will imprint much of their character on those imperfect institutions which are slowly springing up from its decay. The future

progress of eastern Europe, the sources of its wealth, and strength, and all the elements of its social and political institutions, will continue to be mainly influenced by the results of the gradual alterations now taking place in those relations between the proprietors and cultivators of the soil which have hitherto formed the rude bond by which society has been held together. The progress, however, of this, the larger part of the most important division of the globe, must for some generations be a spectacle of deep interest to us, to their immediate western neighbours, and to all the nations, in fact, who have hitherto kept the lead in the career of European civilization. We see the masses of people who occupy the eastern and northern division of our quarter of the earth, stirring and instinct with a new spirit of life and power, beginning to acquire fresh intellect and a less shackled industry, and to unfold more efficiently the moral and physical capabilities of their huge territories. They already assume a station in Europe somewhat proportioned to the extent of their natural resources; and the fate of those nations which have hitherto been the depositaries of the civilization of the modern world is for the future inseparably connected with events which the career of these powerful neighbours must engender. We cannot but see how intimately the course of that career is dependent on present and future changes in the system of labour rents; and for this cause surely, if for no other, that system deserves the careful attention of all who may apply themselves to the task of explaining the nature of the *rent of land*, and examining its influence on the character and fortunes of different nations.

Those, indeed, who value what is called political economy chiefly because it leads to an insight into the manner in which the physical circumstances which surround man on earth develop or sway his moral character, will feel interested on yet higher grounds in tracing the effects of a system, springing out of that common necessity, which, for a long period in the growth of nations, binds the majority of their population to the earth they till; a system which has continued for a series of ages to stamp its peculiar impress on the political, the intellectual, and moral features of so large a division of the human race.*

* When these pages were first written, I had not seen the Second Report of Mr. Jacob, which has since been published in a form suited to general circulation. That gentleman has lately been on the spot, and has cast his extremely acute and practised eye upon the actual condition and probable progress of the agricultural portion of eastern Europe. He has come to results remarkably similar to those which I had ventured to suggest from a more distant and general knowledge of their circumstances. The still predominant influence of labour rents; the general want of capital among the proprietors; the rapid increase in the numbers of the peasant cultivators which has been taking place since their dependence on the landlords has been less servile; the feeble beneficial effects on agriculture and on the general composition of society which in twenty years have sprung from the strong measures of the Prussian government; the difficulties which everywhere oppose themselves to all sudden changes in the old system of cultivation; the strong apparent probability that the future progress in the eastern division of Europe will not, with all the efforts that are making, be much more rapid than that of this country when emerging from a similar state of things; all these are points on which I can now refer with very great satisfaction to the local knowledge and authority of Mr. Jacob in support of the suggestions I have here thrown out. See Second Report passim, but more especially 140 and the following pages.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION I.

METAYER RENTS.

THE Metayer is a peasant tenant extracting his own wages and subsistence from the soil. He pays a *produce* rent to the owner of the land from which he obtains his food. The landlord, besides supplying him with the land on which he lives, supplies him also with the stock by which his labour is assisted. The payment to the landlord may be considered, therefore, to consist of two distinct portions: one constitutes the profits of his stock, the other his rent.

The stock advanced is ordinarily small. It consists of seed; of some rude implements; of the materials of others which the peasant manufactures; and of such materials for his other purposes as the land itself affords; building-timber, stone, &c., and occasionally of some draft animals. If not assisted by the productive powers of the soil, by the machinery of the earth, this stock would either be wholly insufficient for the permanent maintenance of any labourers, or, turned into some other shape, it would provide for the temporary support of a very small number. When applied, however, to

assist the peculiar powers of the earth, this small stock is found sufficient to enable a numerous body of labourers permanently to maintain themselves; and in the produce of their industry the landlord shares. The produce which the possession of land has thus enabled him to acquire, and which without the land he could not have acquired, is that portion of the annual produce of the labour of the country which falls to his share as a land-holder. It is rent. The rest is profits. In the more advanced stages of civilization it is easy to decide in each particular case what proportion of the landlord's revenue from a metayer farm is rent, and what proportion profits. In the ruder stages it is more difficult; but we shall have occasion to advert to this hereafter.

The existence of such a race of tenantry indicates some improvement in the body of the people compared with the state of things in which serf rents originate. They are entrusted with the task of providing the food and annual revenue of the proprietor, without his superintending, or interfering with, their exertions.

The metayer, then, must be somewhat superior in skill and character to the serfs, whose industry can be safely depended on by the proprietor only while exercised under his direct control, and whose rents are therefore paid, not in produce, but in labour. But still the advance of stock by the proprietor, and the abandonment of the management of cultivation to the actual labourers, indicate the continued absence of an intermediate class of capitalists; of men able to advance from their own accumulations the food of the labourer and the stock

by which he is assisted; and thus to take upon themselves the direction of agriculture. The metayer system indicates, therefore, a state of society, advanced, when compared with that in which serf rents prevail: backward, when compared with that in which rents paid by capitalists make their appearance.

It is found springing up in various parts of the world, engrafted occasionally on the serf rents we have been reviewing, and more often on the system of ryot rents we have yet to examine. But it is in the western division of continental Europe, in Italy, Savoy, Piedmont, the Valteline, France, and Spain, that the pure metayer tenantry are the most common, and it is there that they influence most decidedly the systems of cultivation, and those important relations between the different orders of society, which originate in the appropriation of the soil. Into those countries, once provinces of the Roman Empire, they were introduced by the Romans, and, to discover their origin in Europe, we must turn back our eyes for an instant on the classical nations of antiquity.

SECTION II.

OF METAYER RENTS IN GREECE.

GREECE, when it first presents materials for authentic history, was, for the most part, divided into small properties cultivated by the labour of the proprietors, assisted by that of slaves. But before we observe how this state of things led the way to the establishment of metayer rents, it should be

remarked, that relics of a system which even in those days bore the marks of antiquity, and was becoming obsolete, were still to be seen in many districts of Greece.

Irruptions from other countries, as to the details of which the learned dispute in vain, had, previous to the æra of historical certainty, filled several provinces of Greece with foreign masters. These people, in some instances at least, found the original inhabitants acquainted with agriculture, the toils of which they had no inclination, perhaps not sufficient skill, to share. They converted therefore the husbandmen into a peculiar species of tenantry, differing from the serf tenantry of modern Europe in this, that, though attached to the soil, and a sort of predial bondsmen, they paid, not labour, but produce rents, and belonged, in some remarkable instances, not to individuals, but to the state. These tenants were called in Crete, Periœci, Mnotæ, Aphamiotæ; in Laconia, Periœci and Helots; in Attica, Thetes and Pelatæ; in Thessaly, Penestæ; and in other districts by other names.*

* This sketch of the tenantry peculiar to early Greece might have been made more extensive and perhaps more precise. They may be traced in many other districts, and some distinctions might certainly be drawn between the classes named; but this is a subject into the details of which it would be difficult to enter, without either launching into lengthy discussion, or stating shortly as facts what are really only conjectures. Those who may wish to follow the matter up to the original testimony on which all conclusions relating to it must rest, may consult Ruhnken's notes on the words πελάτης and πενεστικὸν in his edition of the Platonic Lexicon of Timæus, two notes relating to the institutions of Laconia and Crete, affixed to Göttling's edition of Aristotle's politics; and, above all, Müller's elaborate history of the Dorian states, a valuable work, for a translation of which the English public are about to be indebted, and very deeply indebted certainly, to Messrs. Tuffnell and Lewis.

The produce rents, which this tenantry were bound in Crete to pay to the government, enabled the legislators of that island to establish public tables in the different districts, at which the freemen and their families were fed.* This institution Lycurgus established or renewed at Lacedæmon, where the tables were supplied by the produce of the industry of the Helots; and wherever Syssitiæ or common tables can be traced, it is at least probable that they were supplied by a similar race of tenants.

In Attica the existence of the Thetes or Pelatæ (as this tenantry were there called) exercised no such influence on the general habits of the citizens as it did in Crete, in Sparta, and in other Dorian states; and when they were restored by Solon to personal freedom, though not to the political rights of citizens, the alteration led to no striking results.†

It requires indeed some little attention to discern their past existence among the Athenians; and the details of their condition are now perhaps out of the reach of research. Μορτὴ was the name applied indifferently, it should seem, both to the share paid

While referring to the two last of these German writers, it may be right to mention that there are one or two points on which I must venture to dissent from their conclusions: these are shortly noticed in the Appendix.

* Aristotle's Politics, book ii.

† Bœckh, however, seems of opinion that at one period of the history of Attica *all* the cultivators of its territory were Thetes. (Vol. i. p. 250, English Translation.) They may have been so; but it is impossible, I think, to read the fifth book of the Memorabilia (the Οἰκονομικὸς λόγος) of Xenophon, without feeling persuaded that in his days the very memory of such a state of things was gone. The Thetes continued to exist as a class in the state long after they had ceased to be its exclusive cultivators, if they ever were such.

as rent and that retained by the Thetes. The rent usually consisted of a sixth of the produce, hence their name of ἑκτημόριοι, sometimes it was a fourth, and then the Pelatæ were said τεταρτίζειν. The Penestæ of Thessaly were a body of similar tenantry. With the exception of the districts occupied by this peculiar species of tenantry,* and of the lands belonging to towns which seem often to have let for terms of years at money rents, the lands of Greece were very generally in the possession of freemen, cultivating small properties with the assistance of slaves.

Slaves were very numerous. Men distributed like the Greeks into small tribes of rude freemen, surrounded by similar tribes, probably exhibit the pugnacious qualities of human nature in the highest degree known. It has often been observed, with truth, that in such a state of society the appearance of domestic slavery indicates a considerable softening of the manners. When warrior nations have found out the means of making the labour of captives contribute to their own ease, they preserve them. Before they have made such a discovery they put them to death. Among the North American Indians, the labour of no man will do more than maintain himself; no profit is to be made of a slave; hence, unless the captive is selected to take upon himself, in the character of a son or husband, the task of protecting and providing food for a family deprived of its chief, he is invariably slaughtered. Some tribes of Tartars on the borders of Persia massacre all the true believers who fall into their hands, but preserve all heretics and infidels; be-

* Appendix.

cause their religion forbids them to make slaves of true believers, and allows them to use or sell all others at their pleasure.

The Greeks used the slaves, with which their frequent wars supplied them, in all kinds of menial and laborious occupations; and a notion that such occupations could not be filled without slaves became so familiar, that even their acutest philosophers seem never to have doubted its accuracy or justice. A commonwealth, says Aristotle, consists of families, and a family to be complete must consist of freemen and slaves;* and in fixing on the form of government which according to him would be most perfect, and conduce the most to the happiness of mankind, he requires that his territory should be cultivated by slaves of different races, and destitute of spirit, that so they may be useful for labour, and that the absence of any disposition to revolt may be securely relied on.† The condition of Africa is now, in this particular, much like that of Greece then. One of the late travellers was explaining to an African chief that there are no slaves in England—"No slaves!" exclaimed their auditor, "then what do you do for servants?"

In Greece the labour of cultivation was at first shared between the master and slave. This must always be while properties are small; and accordingly it was so in Latium. Cincinnatus would have starved on his four acres had he trusted to the produce slaves could extract from it, and neglected to

* Pol. Book I. Cap. iii. *οἰκία δὲ τέλειος ἐκ δούλων καὶ ἐλευθέρων.*

† Aristot. Pol. Book VII. Cap. x. If these cannot be obtained, Aristotle expresses a wish for barbarian periœci (compounds of the serf, metayer, and slave) of similar dispositions.

lay his own hands on the plough. But as civilization went forward in Greece, properties became enlarged. The proprietors clung to cities, where popular governments offered to the active duties to perform and objects of ambition to aspire to; and to the indolent and voluptuous every species of pleasure, made more seducing by all the embellishments that could be created by a taste and fancy which seem to have belonged to those times and to that people alone. By such occupations and amusements many of the leading Grecians were so engrossed, that they refused to give up even the time and attention necessary to command their household slaves.* Those who still attended to the management of their farms must have found the task difficult and hazardous. Xenophon has left an accurate picture of the mode in which the Grecian gentlemen of his day conducted the cultivation of their estates. In one of the dialogues of the Memorabilia, Socrates relates a conversation he had had with Ischomachus, who was, by the confession of all men and women, foreigners and citizens, Καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς, an accomplished and good man. Ischomachus details those particulars of his domestic economy which had principally earned for him this general praise, and explains at large his management of his household, his wife, and finally his estate. It appears in the progress of the dialogue that the estate of Ischomachus was within a short distance of Athens, that he rode to it very frequently, paid it much personal attention, and superintended all its

* Arist. Pol. Book I. Cap. iv. Those who are able to escape these vexations procure a steward to undertake the task, while they themselves attend to politics or philosophy.

arrangements with great care. While cultivation was carried on under the superintendence of such men—while proprietors, freed from all necessity of personal labour, liberal, learned, and wealthy, sedulously applied the powers of their minds to agriculture, the art made rapid progress, and a succession of writers on the subject appeared in various parts of Greece, whose works evidenced both the quantity of intellect applied to the unfolding the resources of the soil, and the actual progress of cultivation.

But causes which destroyed this system of managing the land were silently at work. Even Ischomachus was obliged to rely much on his ἐπίσκοποι, or overseers; slaves who were very carefully trained as bailiffs, like the Roman villici. All estates, however, could not be, like his, within a ride of the capital; the more distant were necessarily confided almost wholly to these managing slaves; and their management, unless they differed utterly from all other slaves similarly trusted, must have been very generally careless and bad. As Greece too became consolidated, first by the Macedonian, then the Roman influence, the possessions of individual proprietors naturally extended themselves over a larger space, and profitable management by slave agents must have become more and more impracticable. At last a tenant was introduced who, receiving from the land-owner his land and stock, became responsible to him for a certain proportion, usually half, of the produce: and the proprietors gave up finally all interference with the task of cultivation. These new tenants were called mortitæ, and they are called so still in Greece.

The precise date at which they began to supersede the cultivation by proprietors is not known. It is supposed by some that this happened after their connection with Rome, and that μορτιτὴς, which is not a word of ancient or classical Greek, was a translation of the Latin phrase *colonus partiarius*. But we can see so distinctly the same internal causes which led to the creation of the Roman tenantry acting in Greece, that it is probable the mortitæ appeared there as soon, if not sooner than the *coloni partiarii* among the Romans, and that the word μορτιτὴς was suggested by μορτὴ, which we have seen was the name of the produce rent paid by the ancient Thetes of Attica. However this might be, by such a tenantry the surface of Greece was gradually occupied; they survived the Mahometan conquest, and the lands of the Turkish Agas were very generally cultivated, before the present disturbances, by Grecian mortitæ or metayers.*

* See Historical Outline of the Greek Revolution published by Murray, p. 9. "The nominal conditions upon which the Christian peasant of European Turkey labours for the Turkish proprietor are not oppressive: they were among the many established usages of the country adopted by the Ottomans, and the practice is similar to that which is still very common in all the poorer countries of Europe. After the deduction of about a seventh for the imperial land-tax, the landlord receives half the remainder, or a larger share, according to the proportion of seed, stock, and instruments of husbandry which he has supplied."

SECTION III.

ON METAYERS AMONG THE ROMANS.

THE causes which introduced metayers into Italy were precisely similar to those which ultimately established them in Greece. The Romans began by sharing with their slaves the toils of cultivation. As the size of estates enlarged, their owners became the superintendents of the labour they before assisted. In this stage the art of agriculture was deeply studied in Rome, as it had been in a similar stage in Greece, by a class of men well qualified to carry it far towards perfection. The works of fifty Greek writers on agriculture were known to the Romans,* and those of several Carthaginians. Of these last, one, Mago, was marked by the honourable distinction of having his works translated into Latin in obedience to a formal decree of the Senate.† Roman works on agriculture were less numerous than the Greek, but they were the productions of eminent men, beginning with Cato the censor (qui eam latinè loqui primus instituit, Col.) and including Varro and Virgil. The great poet was far from being the last among the cultivators of his day, and has even, in a few remarkable lines, recommended that alternate husbandry, and substitution of pulse and green crops for fallows, which is the main basis of the most important improvements of our own times.

> Alternis idem tonsas cessare novales,
> Et segnem patiere situ durescere campum;

* Columella, Book I. Chap. i. † Ibid. Book I. Chap. i.

Aut ibi flava seres, mutato sidere, farra,
Unde prius lætum siliquâ quassante legumen
Aut tenuis fetus viciæ, tristisque lupini
Sustuleris fragiles calamos silvamque sonantem.

GEOR. Lib. I. l. 71.

As the empire became larger, the size of estates increased; and when they were scattered over provinces which reached from Britain and Spain to Asia Minor and Syria, the superintendence of the husbandry carried on upon them became burthensome and inefficient,* and even the task of training properly the villici or managers was abandoned, and the lands given up in some measure to the discretion of an inferior class† of slaves. The immediate consequence was such a deficiency in the produce, that some strange and unknown cause was supposed to be enfeebling the fecundity of the earth itself. Among even the more eminent Romans, while some talked of a long continued unwholesomeness in the seasons, others were inclined to a superstitious belief that the world was waxing old, and its powers decaying: that the exuberant crops reaped by their forefathers had been the produce of its youthful strength; and that the sterility which then afflicted it was a symptom of its decrepitude.‡ Columella saw more distinctly the real cause of the falling off; he describes, in a passage which has been often quoted, the mal-practices of the slaves on those distant farms which it was not easy for the proprietor

* Col. Book I. Chap. i. Nam qui longinqua, ne dicam transmarina rura mercantur, velut hæredibus patrimonio suo, et quod gravius est, vivi, cedunt servis.

† Col. Book I. Chap. i. Rem rusticam pessimo cuique servorum, velut carnifici, noxæ dedimus, quam majorum nostrorum optimus quisque optimè tractaverit.

‡ Col. Book I. Chap. i.

often to visit; and though himself an indignant advocate for the more general practice of agriculture, as the most liberal and useful of arts, he concludes by recommending that all such estates should be let. "Ita fit ut et actor et familia peccent, et ager sæpius infametur: quare talis generis prædium, si, ut dixi, domini præsentiâ cariturum est, censeo *locandum*." *

A race of tenants then gradually acquired possession of the surface of Italy and the provinces. They were of various classes, but the coloni partiarii or *medietarii*, metayers, seem always to have been favourites, and the terms on which they cultivated to have appeared the most just and expedient. Pliny having tried, it seems, some other form of contract with his tenantry, and finding it answer ill, announces in one of his letters his determination to adopt the metayer system as the best remedy. "The only remedy," he says, "I can think of is, not to reserve my rent in money but in kind (partibus), and to place some of my servants to overlook the tillage, and to take care of my share of the produce, as indeed there is no sort of revenue more just than that which is regulated by the soil, the climate, and the seasons.†

The system thus praised ultimately prevailed throughout the provinces of the empire; and in the western part of Europe was never wholly extirpated by the convulsions which accompanied its downfall. In many instances indeed the first vio-

* Col. Lib. I. Chap. vii.

† Plin. Epist. Book IX. 37. It appears from another letter that the most expensive stock supplied to the tenantry by the proprietors consisted of the slaves.

lence of the barbarians put to flight all regular industry, and into the wilderness which they created they were obliged to introduce labour rents and a race of serfs. The feudal system, too, and the numerous body of arrière vassals it gave birth to, changed the occupation of much of the country. But still, thick as the darkness was which covered for a time the remains of Roman civilization, its effects were never wholly lost. The language, the customs, the laws of the provincials still survived, and struggling at last into influence they communicated much of their character to that mixed race which has arisen in western Europe: in different degrees in different countries, but enough in all the principal kingdoms to distinguish their inhabitants broadly from the more primitive race to the eastward of the Rhine.

The class of metayers was probably never anywhere wholly destroyed, and as time softened the character of the conquerors, and introduced some degree of confidence and security into their relations with the subject cultivators, industry began to return to its old employments. It was always an object gained by the landlord, if he could substitute a produce rent, and a tenant whom he could trust with the whole task of cultivation, for a rude serf like the German or Slavonic boor, whose labour he could rely on only while he himself enforced and superintended it. Metayers therefore spread themselves: the domain lands of the proprietors fell generally into their hands, and they re-acquired that general, though not complete, possession of the agriculture of western Europe which we see them in a great measure still retaining.

SECTION IV.

ON METAYER RENTS IN FRANCE.

THE province of Gaul was violently affected in all its social relations by the various irruptions and final predominance of the barbarians. The gradual establishment of feudal tenures, and the introduction of serfs and labour rents, were two of the most important effects of the change of masters. The number and species of feudal tenures were multiplied to a strange extent in France by the practice of subinfeudation; which had been checked in England, but prevailed widely on the continent. The seignoral rights, and the rents and services to which they gave rise, were ranged by the French lawyers under 300 heads, the subdivisions of which they state to be infinite.*

Some of these multiplied rights no doubt were engrafted on the more simple relation of the serfs to their landlords; for as the feudal system became familiar to the people, the notions and phraseology to which it gave birth extended themselves to a multitude of relations and objects quite foreign to the original aim of the system itself. Thus on the continent annuities in money or corn were granted as feuds, and occasionally even the use of sums of money;† and in England the copyholder, whom we can distinctly trace to the villein or slave, was admitted to swear fealty and do homage to his lord much in the manner of the military tenants; a prac-

* Dict. de Finance, Vol. II. p. 115.

† Hargreave and Butler's Notes on Coke upon Littleton. Sect. 300. Note on Tenants in common.

tice which still continues. Thus, also, those admitted to degrees at our Universities do feudal homage to the Vice-Chancellor. By a similar abuse of feudal forms, some of the serfs in France no doubt ranked at last amongst the manorial tenantry of the Seigneur, and their relation was considered to be a feudal one.

But besides the serfs thus gradually assimilated to vassals, there were other serfs whose state of slavery was as distinct and undisguised as that of the Russian cultivators is now: they existed for some time in considerable numbers, and continued to exist in several provinces up to the æra of the Revolution. We will say something of these before we proceed to the metayers. They were found on the estates of the crown, of lay individuals, and of ecclesiastics, under the name of mainmortables, which was used indifferently with that of serf, and appears to have been considered synonymous with it. They were attached to the soil, and if they escaped from it were restored by the interference of the tribunals to their owners, to whom their persons and those of their posterity belonged. They were incapable of transmitting property: if they acquired any, their owners might seize it at their death: the exercise of this right was in full vigour, and some startling instances led Louis XVI. to make a feeble attempt at a partial emancipation. Proprietors, exercising their *droit de suite*, as it was called, had forced the reluctant tribunals of the king to deliver into their hands the property of deceased citizens who had been long settled as respectable inhabitants in different towns of France, some even in Paris itself; but who were proved to have been originally serfs

on the estates of the claimants. The contrast between the condition of these poor people and that of the rest of the population became then too strong to be endured; but though the naturally kind feelings of Louis appear to have been roused upon the occasion, he ventured no farther than to give liberty to the serfs or mainmortables on his own domains, and to abolish indirectly the droit de suite, by forbidding his tribunals to seize the person or property of serfs who had once become domiciled in free districts. In the edict published by the unfortunate monarch on this subject, he declares that this state of slavery exists in several of his provinces, and includes a great number of his subjects, and lamenting that he is not rich enough to ransom them all, he states that his respect for the rights of property will not allow him to interfere between them and their owners, but he expresses a hope that his example and the love of humanity so peculiar to the French people would lead under his reign to the entire emancipation of all his subjects.*

To return however to our immediate object, the metayer tenantry. In spite of the cultivation by vassals and serfs, and that at one time doubtless to a very considerable extent, the metayers had in their possession before the Revolution four-sevenths of the surface of France.† Another one-sixth or one-seventh was in the possession of capitalists

* For this edict, see Dict. des Finances, at the word Mainmorte.

† This is the calculation of Duprès St. Maur, sanctioned by Turgot. Adam Smith states five-sixths. Turgot, Vol. VI. p. 209. Smith, Vol. II. p. 92. Edition of 1812. Arthur Young thinks seven-eighths, Vol. I. p. 403.

finding their own stock and paying money-rents.* The remainder was held by the proprietors, or by serf or feudal tenantry.

The terms on which the French metayers held their farms differed much from age to age: these variations do not immediately strike the eye of an observer, because the nominal rent and nominal share of the tenant have changed but little, and the metayer still very generally takes that portion of the produce, viz. the half, from which his original name of medietarius was derived. But while the metayer tenant pays nominally the same rent, his own share of the produce may be diminished in two modes: by his being subjected to a greater quantity of the public burthens: or by the size of his metairie being reduced. By this second mode of reduction, I am not aware that the French metayer suffered much: fifty acres was not an unusual size for a metairie; in poor districts they comprised a much larger quantity of land.†

By the first mode of reducing his share of the produce—that is, by the increase of the public burthens which he had to bear, the metayer suffered to an extent fatal both to his own comforts and to the prosperity of agriculture; a circumstance which had a great share in converting the peasantry into those reckless instruments of mischief which they proved in many instances to be during the Revolution.

* Arthur Young, Vol. I. p. 402.

† Arthur Young however, it is right to mention, came to a different conclusion. "The division of farms," he says, "and the population is so great that the misery flowing from it is in some places extreme." Vol. I. p. 404. He gives some instances: but it may be questioned whether these were not small proprietors or feudal tenants.

The Taille was an imposition which the French antiquaries think they can trace to the age of the Emperor Augustus;* we know that it was levied by the barons on their vassals during the ages of feudal anarchy; by the sovereign as sovereign, that is beyond the limits of his own domains, as early as 1325: that it became under Charles VII., in 1444, an annual tax, and continued afterwards to be the main branch of the revenue of the kingdom.† It was meant to be levied according to the means of the contributor, and was extremely defective both in its principle and mode of imposition; but even these defects would not, perhaps, have made it intolerable, had it not been for its gradually increasing amount, which at last almost absorbed the daily bread of the peasant. It would have been well for these poor people had that proved true in their case, which has lately been promulgated with great confidence as an universal truth, namely, that when once certain habits of life are established among a population, a diminution of their means of subsistence is followed invariably by a slackened rate of the increase of their numbers, and a consequent rise of wages, which restores them to their former position. Theirs was a different lot. As the command of the French peasants over the means of existence became less, their habits altered, but their numbers did not decrease; some one was always found ready to occupy a metairie, "parceque (says M. Destutt de Tracy, in describing their misery) il y a toujours des malheureux qui ne savent que devenir."

* Dict. des Finances. Discours Preliminaires, Part VII. and Tom. III. p. 637.

† Dict. des Finances, Tom. III. p. 638, 639.

The mode in which the taille gradually produced the degradation of the peasantry is feelingly, and, no doubt, accurately described by Turgot,* in his correspondence with the ministers, while intendant of the Limosin.

After remarking, that while the cultivator really received half his produce, he had the means of becoming gradually a small capitalist, and ultimately of providing the stock and paying a money-rent, he observes, that if the tax had from its origin been laid on the land-holders, this natural progress of events would not have been deranged, and would have procured to the owner the enjoyment of his revenue, without any care on his part: but that the taille was at first a species of poll-tax, and very light, from which the nobles were exempt: that as the tax increased, it became necessary to levy it in proportion to the means of the cultivators, which were calculated according to the extent of their occupations, a method by which the privilege of the nobles was eluded: that while the imposition was moderate, the metayer paid it by retrenching his comforts; but that the tax increasing constantly, the portion of the cultivator was so much diminished, that at last he was reduced to the most profound misery. These reflections, he says, explain how it came to be possible that the cultivators should be plunged into the excess of misery in which they then existed in the Limosin and Angoumois, and perhaps in other provinces of "petite culture." That misery he declares is such, that on

* By Vauban in the Dixme Royal, and in the "Detail de la France," with more detail and animation; but these descriptions are less exclusively applicable to the *Metayer* peasantry than Turgot's.

the greater part of the domains the cultivators had not, after paying their taxes, more than from 25 to 30 livres to spend annually for each person (not in money, but reckoning the value of all that they consumed in kind); often they had less, and when they could subsist no longer, the proprietor was obliged to contribute to their maintenance. Some proprietors, he adds, had been at last forced to perceive that their pretended exemption had been much more mischievous than useful to them; and that an imposition which had entirely ruined their cultivators had fallen back wholly on themselves. But the illusions of self-interest ill understood, supported by vanity, had long maintained their ground, and were only dissipated when things were carried to such an excess, that the proprietors would have found no one to cultivate their lands, if they had not consented to contribute with their metayers to the payment of a part of the imposition.' That custom had begun to introduce itself into some parts of the Limosin, but had not extended itself much: the proprietor yielded to such an arrangement only when he could find no metayer without it; and even in that case the metayer was always reduced to what was strictly necessary * to prevent his dying from hunger.

The tax evidently did not begin to move from the shoulders of the labourer to those of the employer till the first had been gradually reduced to the minimum of subsistence, and then only moved to such

* Ainsi, même dans ce cas-là, le metayer est toujours réduit à ce qu'il faut précisement pour ne pas mourir de faim. Turgot, Tom. IV. p. 277. Mémoire presented to the Council, Œuvres de Turgot, Tom. IV. p. 271, 272, 274, 275.

an extent as was necessary to preserve to him that minimum.

The Revolution converted many of these metayers into small proprietors, but they still abound in France; and their condition seems to have altered for the better less than might have been expected from the changes which have taken place in the system of taxation. M. Destutt de Tracy, a member of the Institute, and peer of France under the Emperor, who states himself to have been for forty years proprietor of a domain farmed by metayers, gives a wretched account of their condition, and states that he is acquainted with metairies which have never, in the memory of man, supplied the food of the metayers from their own half of the produce. As his description is the most authentic account of this tenancy as it exists at present in France, I subjoin it.*

"Ils forment ce que l'on appelle communément des domaines ou des metairies, et ils y attachent frequemment autant et plus de terres qu'il n'y en a dans les grandes fermes, surtout si l'on ne dédaigne pas de mettre en ligne de compte les terres vagues, qui ordinairement ne sont pas rares dans ces pays, et qui ne sont pas tout-à-fait sans utilité, puisqu'on s'en sert pour le pacage, ou même pour y faire de temps en temps quelques emblavures afin de laisser reposer les champs plus habituellement cultivés.

* * * * * *

Le propriétaire est donc reduit a les garnir lui-même de bestiaux, d'utensiles, et de tout ce qui est necessaire a l'exploitation, et à y établir une famille de paysans, qui n'ont que leur bras, et

* Destutt de Tracy, Traité D'Economie Politique, p. 116.

avec lesquels il convient ordinairement, au lieu de leur donner des gages, de leur abandonner la moitié du produit, pour le salaire de leurs peines. C'est de là qu'ils sont appelés *metayers*, travailleurs à moitié. Si la terre est trop mauvaise, cette moitié des produits est manifestement insuffisante pour faire vivre, même miserablement, le nombre d'hommes necessaire pour la travailler; ils s'endettent bientôt, et on est obligé de les renvoyer. Cependant on en trouve toujours pour les remplacer, parce qu'il y a toujours des malheureux qui ne savent que devenir. Ceux-là même vont ailleurs, où ils ont souvent le même sort. Je connais de ces métairies, qui de memoire d'homme n'ont jamais nourri leurs laboureurs au moyen de leur moitié de fruits."

It appears by an article in the 'Foreign Quarterly,' published while these pages were in the press, that, in spite of the multiplication of small proprietors since the Revolution, metayers are supposed still to cultivate one-half of France. Their actual condition is little improved, it appears, by the change which has taken place in the system of taxation, and their sufferings are aggravated by the spread of a class of middle-men (always existing to some extent), who, without changing the terms on which the actual cultivator holds the soil, pays a money-rent to the proprietor, and grinds and oppresses the tenant to make his bargain profitable. The condition of the French metayers has been treated of with some fulness. This will enable us to review more rapidly the same class of tenantry existing in other countries, and differing from the French only in local peculiarities.

SECTION V.

ON METAYER RENTS IN ITALY.

THE decline of the power of the Roman and Byzantine Emperors in Italy was gradual and slow; the shade of her great name seemed to suspend a shield for a time before the precincts of the ancient capital. Both the language and the history of the Italians indicate that the alterations in the habits and in the mechanism of society produced in the original seats of the empire by the final change of masters and intermixture of races were much less violent and general than those which took place in the distant provinces. From many districts of Italy it is probable that the coloni medietarii never disappeared, and that the peasants who now cultivate the soil have succeeded to them in an unbroken line. The large grazing farms of Lombardy, the tracts of the Campagna, the maremnæ which occur on the coast, are occupied by capitalists; for wherever large herds of cattle are to be maintained, neither the peasant nor the landlords are able to supply them. But in spite of these, and perhaps other exceptions, Italy, from the Alps to Calabria, is still covered with metayers.* The metairies of Italy are less than those of France. Their extent will everywhere be governed by what the landlord supposes to be his interest; if it is an object with him that his estates should not have fewer hands than are equal to its complete cultivation, so it is an object with him that it should not have more. The number of

* That is, where the lands are let: small proprietors are not uncommon.

acres which a metayer and his family can manage must depend much on the course of crops and mode of tillage. In France the system of cropping, once universal in Northern Europe, still prevails extensively; that is, corn-crops while the land can bear them, and then fallows, or leys of some years standing, with some waste ground for pasture. On such a plan a family require and can manage a considerable tract. In Italy the rotation of crops practised by the Romans is still carried on; the legumina recommended by Virgil are extensively cultivated, and the cattle are often fed from the produce of the arable ground. On such a system, a much smaller quantity of land will employ and maintain a family. Metayers are always found ready to accept a subdivision. For reasons we shall have to explain presently, those motives to a voluntary forbearance from early marriages which affect the higher classes in all countries, and all classes in some countries, have rarely much influence on a peasantry receiving the wages of their labour in the shape of raw produce raised by themselves. Such are metayers: their multiplication, as we have seen in the case of France, usually goes on till they are stopped by the smallness of their maintenance, or, as more often happens, by the policy of the proprietors refusing to subdivide lands already supplied with labour beyond the point they deem most advantageous to themselves.* The metayer farms in different parts

* There are, however, parts of Tuscany where it is the custom for the eldest son only to marry, but no restraints of this kind have prevented the Italian metayers, generally, from increasing till their numbers became fully equal to the demands of the proprietors, and in many cases really burthensome to agriculture.

of Italy are of different sizes; those of Tuscany include about ten acres. But in Naples they do not exceed five, and the tenants there pay two-thirds of the produce as rents. Their climate and soil enable them to do this: the first permits them to dispense with many things which are strictly necessaries elsewhere, while the earth, with bounteous fertility, produces eight crops in five years, in fields shaded at the same time by a profitable forest of fruit-trees and vines. Still, making ample allowance for these advantages, one-third of the produce of five acres must yield a miserable subsistence to a peasant subject all the while to the exactions of a needy government, and of an aristocracy armed with all sorts of mischievous powers and privileges, and extremely inclined to abuse them. The Tuscan metayers are considered to be best off, and near Florence have a considerable appearance of ease, which is attributed partly to the manufacture of straw hats, an employment very general among them. But at a distance from the town, their circumstances are wretched; their food coarse, bad, and scanty; and their penury such as keeps them in a state of perpetual debt to the landlords for food or assistance of different kinds.*

Mr. Coxe, who some years since visited the Valteline, and Mr. Gilly, who more lately was among the Vaudois, give a miserable account of the poverty of the metayers. In the provinces of Spain in which they most abound they are said to be extremely

* Arthur Young's Travels in France and Italy. Appendix. These volumes contain much detailed information on the situation of the metayers in Lombardy and Tuscany.

poor. The cultivation of the Canary Islands is in their hands.

In Afghaunisthaun a race of tenants is found called Buzgurs,* who seem to differ in no respect from the metayers of western Europe. This is a singular instance in Asia, where this tenancy, although sometimes partially engrafted on Ryot rents, is perhaps in no other spot to be found existing in its pure form. But Afghaunisthaun is a strange land, in which, from the peculiarities of its geographical and political condition, fragments of almost all the civil institutions known in the rest of the world continue to co-exist in a state of confusion approaching to anarchy.

SECTION VI.

SUMMARY OF METAYER RENTS.

Upon comparing the metayer with the serf, it is obvious that he has many advantages: his being intrusted with the whole care of the cultivation is a circumstance which not only indicates his superior estimation in society, but brings with it substantial improvements in his condition: we have noticed that the forced labour of the serf supposes some power of summary coercion in the master, without which cultivation could hardly go on. But the metayer is freed from the galling superintendance of the proprietor, and the terms of their connection do not make such a summary power necessary. That of the metayers many were once

* Elphinston's Caubul. Vol. I. p. 471.

slaves there can be little doubt; they are, and have been for some ages generally, I believe universally, freemen; and the sovereigns of the different countries in which they exist have been able in most cases so far to extend the power of the royal tribunals, as effectually to secure their persons and effects.

Another advantage of the metayer, which in practice, it is to be feared, is less than might be hoped, is this; that as the landlord's rent depends upon the amount of the produce, he has an obvious interest in preventing the energy or the means of the tenant from being lessened by oppression. A half-starved metayer must needs be a bad agent in a cultivation, on the efficiency of which the proprietor's revenue depends, and the losses of which he must share. But what Turgot calls "the illusions of self-interest ill understood," or in plain terms, perhaps, the covetousness and ignorance of the proprietors, have prevented the tenant from reaping all the benefit this consideration might have been expected to secure to him. While the taille in France, for instance, could be extracted from the tenant, we have seen that he was made to bear it, though it kept him on the verge of starvation; and in other countries, either the too great subdivision of the soil, the increase of the landlord's proportion of the produce, or the saddling the tenant with burthensome conditions as to the taxes, have left him in a state of great and helpless depression. Still the common interest he has with the landlord in the success of his industry is never wholly without its effects. When reduced to extremities, the tenant has a patron to apply to, who

cannot for his own sake let him perish, or even suffer beyond a certain point;* and in calamitous seasons, advances of food and other necessaries by the landlords are almost universal.

But if the relation between the metayer and the proprietor has some advantages when compared with that between the serf tenant paying labour rents and his lord, it has also some very serious inconveniences peculiar to itself. The divided interest which exists in the produce of cultivation mars almost every attempt at improvement. The tenant is unwilling to listen to the suggestions of the landlord, the landlord reluctant to intrust additional means in the hands of a prejudiced, and usually very ignorant, tenant. The tenant's dread of innovation is natural; he merely exists upon a system of cultivation familiar to him: the failure of an experiment might leave him to starve. This dread, however, makes it almost impossible to introduce improvements into the practice of the metayers. Arthur Young witnessed many attempts made by amateur agriculturists on their own estates; and concludes his account of them by declaring, that with metayer tenants the common system of the country must be adhered to, be it good or bad.† While the tenant is frightened at a change of system, the landlord hangs back, with a hardly less mischievous reluctance, from the advances necessary to carry on efficiently any system whatever. When stock is to be advanced by one party, and used by another for their common benefit, some waste and carelessness in the receiving party, great jealousy

* Turgot. Destutt Tracy. Arthur Young.

† Arthur Young's Travels in France.

and reluctance in the contributing party, follow naturally. The proprietors, (says Turgot,) who only advance stock because they cannot avoid it, and who are themselves not rich, confine their advances to what is most strictly necessary; accordingly, there is no comparison to be made between the stock advanced by a proprietor for the cultivation of his metairies, and that used by farmers in districts cultivated by capitalists.* We know, however, from other authority, that the capital to which that of the metayers was thus decidedly inferior was itself extremely scanty.†

Where the proprietors are needy, careless, or absent, the case becomes of course much worse. "In bad years (Turgot remarks) the proprietor is obliged to feed the metayers, for fear of losing all he has advanced. This mode of management requires on the part of the proprietor continual attention, and an habitual residence: accordingly, if it is seen that the affairs of a proprietor are in the smallest degree deranged, or if he is obliged from any cause to absent himself, his metairies cease to produce him anything. The estates of widows and minors usually relapse into waste."‡ When we remember the number of proprietors who were necessarily absent from military duties or other causes, and add them to the widows, and minors, and persons whose affairs were deranged, the list of estates either very badly cultivated, or not cultivated at all, will appear formidable indeed, and we are prepared to hear without surprise "of the exhausted state of the province," and the "abandonment of

* Œuvres de Turgot, Tom. IV. p. 267.

† Arthur Young. ‡ Turgot, Tom. VI. p. 203, 204.

many metairie estates for want of cattle, and the inability of the proprietors to provide stock."*

The causes which, under the eyes of Turgot, produced these effects in the Limosin must act more or less in all the metayer countries of Europe, and must produce much of the poverty to be observed in them.

Metayer rents may increase, it is clear, from two causes; from an increase of the whole produce, effected by the greater skill or industry of the tenant, or from an increase of the landlord's proportion of the produce, the amount of the produce itself remaining the same. When rent increases, and the produce remains stationary, the country at large gains nothing by the increase; its means of paying taxes, of supporting fleets and armies, are just what they were before: there has been a transfer of wealth, but no increase of it; but when metayer rents increase because the produce has become larger, then the country itself is richer to that extent; its power of paying taxes, of supporting fleets and armies has been increased; there has been an increase of wealth, not a mere transfer from one hand to another of what before existed. Such an increase of rents indicates also another increase of wealth, as extensive, and more beneficial, which is found in the augmentation of the revenues of the metayers themselves, whose half the produce is augmented to precisely the same extent as the landlord's.

The existence of rents upon the metayer system is in no degree dependent upon the existence of different qualities of soil or of different returns to

* Turgot, Tom. IV. p. 302.

the stock and labour employed. The landlords of any country who, with small quantities of stock, have quantities of land sufficient to enable a body of peasant labourers to maintain themselves would continue to derive a revenue as land-owners from sharing in the produce of the industry of those labourers, though all the lands in the country were perfectly equal in quality.

In metayer countries the wages of the main body of the people depend upon the rent they pay. The quantity of produce being determined by the fertility of the soil, the extent of the metairie, and the skill, industry, and efficiency of the metayer, then the division of that produce, on which division his wages depend, is determined by his contract with the landlord. In like manner the amount of rent in such countries is determined by the amount of wages. The whole amount of produce being decided as before, the landlord's share, or the rent, depends upon the contract he makes with the labourer, that is, upon the amount deducted as wages.

Of the three large classes of peasant rents, metayer rents prevail the least extensively. They spread over a portion of the cultivated surface of the earth considerably less than those in which labour rents or ryot rents predominate. But they occupy countries which have long been the seats of nations eminent in the foremost ranks of civilized people, and which are likely for many ages to be among the most distinguished depositaries of the knowledge and the arts of mankind.

These too are agricultural nations: that is, by far the greater part of their productive population

is employed in agriculture. The extent of their wealth must be mainly dependent, therefore, on the success of their agriculture; and the success of their agriculture will be determined in a great degree by the nature of the conditions under which the land is occupied, and by the character of their tenantry.

Not only the wealth of a nation, but the composition of society, the extent and the respective influence of the different classes of which it consists, are powerfully affected by the efficiency of agriculture. The extent of the classes maintained in non-agricultural employments throughout the world must be determined by the quantity of food which the cultivators produce beyond what is necessary for their own maintenance. The agriculturists of England for instance produce food sufficient to maintain themselves and double their own numbers. Now the existence of this large non-agricultural population, the wealth and influence of its employers, and of those persons who traffic in the produce of its industry, affect in a very striking manner the actual elements of political power among the English, their practical constitution, and their national character and habits. To the absence of such a body of non-agriculturists and of the wealth and influence which accompany their existence, we may trace many of the political phenomena to be observed among our continental neighbours. If the agriculture of those neighbours should ever become so efficient as to enable them to maintain a non-agricultural population at all proportionable to our own, they may perhaps approximate to a social and political organization si-

milar to that seen here. At all events they will have the means of doing so. I am giving, it will be remembered, no opinion on the desirableness of such an approximation, but there can be no question as to the striking effects the change must produce on their habits and institutions, and on the amount of their national strength and external influence.

That no very marked change in the efficiency of agriculture, and in the relative numbers of agricultural and non-agricultural population, will take place in any nation while the metayer system remains in full force, is what we are entitled to assume, from the view we have already taken of the inherent faults and of the past effects of that system. The actual prevalence of metayer rents therefore, their modifications, their gradual progress in some cases towards different forms of holding, in others the sturdy resistance the system offers to the assaults of time, and even to the wishes and the efforts of those who would willingly rid themselves of it; these are all circumstances to be studied carefully by those who would discern the causes of the actual state of some of the most interesting countries in Europe, or speculate upon the progress of future changes, either in their political and social institutions, or in their relative strength and power as nations.

To these claims to an attentive examination we add another of not less importance, which has been already incidentally mentioned, namely, the strict connection which metayer rents have (in common with the other systems of peasant rents) with the wages of by far the larger portion of the industrious population of countries in which they prevail.

This connection brings their effects into close contact with the comforts, the character, and condition of an important division of the great family of mankind, and is alone sufficient to secure to them, in all their details and variations, the anxious attention of the statesman and practical philanthropist.

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CHAPTER IV.

SECTION I.

ON RYOT RENTS.

Ryot Rents are, with a few exceptions, peculiar to Asia.* They are produce rents paid by a labourer, raising his own wages from the soil, to the sovereign as its proprietor. They are usually accompanied by a precarious right on the part of the tenant to remain the occupant of his allotment of land while he pays the rent demanded from him. These rents originate in the rights of the sovereign as sole proprietor of the soil of his dominions. Such rights, we have seen, have been acknowledged at some period by most nations. In Europe they have disappeared or become nominal; but the Asiatic sovereigns continue to be, as they have been for a long series of ages, the direct landlords of the peasant tenants who maintain themselves on the soil of their dominions. Indications present themselves occasionally which would lead us to conclude that in portions of that quarter of the globe a state of things once existed under which the rights to the land must have been in a different state from

* They have been introduced by Asiatics into Turkey in Europe. They exist in Egypt; and may perhaps hereafter be traced in Africa.

that in which we see them: but it was in an antiquity so remote, as to baffle all attempts at investigation. Within the period of historical memory, all the great empires of Asia have been overrun by foreigners; and on their rights as conquerors the claim of the present sovereigns to the soil rests. China, India, Persia, and Asiatic Turkey, all placed at the outward edge of the great basin of central Asia, have been subdued in their turn by irruptions of its tribes, some of them more than once. China seems even at this moment hardly escaping from the danger of another subjugation. Wherever these Scythian invaders have settled, they have established a despotic form of government, to which they have readily submitted themselves, while they were obliging the inhabitants of the conquered countries to submit to it.

The uniformity of the political system adopted by them is a striking peculiarity; and becomes more striking when seen in contrast with the free constitutions established by the Germanic hordes, which, in the western division of the old world, took possession of countries more wealthy and civilized than their own. It has been supposed that the difference may be traced to the previous habits of the Tartars as pastoral tribes. But the Germans too consisted of pastoral tribes, and the difference of their institutions must be sought in some other cause than this. It may be found perhaps, in a great measure, in the different character of their original seats. Amidst the fastnesses and morasses of his native woods, the German, when not actually at war, was in tolerable security; his habits of military obedience, we know, relaxed, and he en-

joyed that rude and indolent freedom which the warlike barbarian never relinquished but from necessity. Some of the tribes of the Affghans exhibit remarkable instances of the different degrees of submission to authority produced among pastoral nations under the prevalence of the different feelings of security or of peril. They are only slowly and partially abandoning migratory habits: during part of the year they are stationary, in a country in which they feel secure; in another part of the year they move to distant pastures. While safe and tranquil, their institutions are as free as those of the ancient Germans, and in many points of detail resemble them with remarkable closeness. When they begin to move, and the approach of danger and the necessity of united exertion begin to be felt, they pass at once to a despotic form of government: a Khan, whose authority while they are stationary and safe is disclaimed, is at once invested with supreme power; and so helpless do they feel without him, that when from private views he has wished to remain at court, or employ himself elsewhere, he has been recalled, by their clamour, to receive their submission, and to put himself at their head.* But the Tartars of central Asia inhabit

* Elphinstone's Caubul, Vol. II. p. 215. When the people are collected into camps, they are governed by their own Mooshirs, without any reference to the Khaun; and when they are scattered over the country, they subsist without any government at all: but when a march is contemplated, they immediately submit to the Khaun; and where they have to pass an enemy's country, he is appointed head of the Chelwashtees, assumes an absolute authority, and becomes an object of respect and anxiety to all the tribe. A proof of the importance of the Khaun during a march is shown by the conduct of the Nausser at one time, when Junus Khaun, their present chief, refused to accompany them in one of their migrations.

vast plains, traversed in every direction by mounted enemies. The task of guarding their property and lives is a constant campaign; and their habits of military submission have no intervals of relaxation: they are born, and they die in them. It is possible that when they became masters of the fair empires of exterior Asia, they found already established, in some instances, the right of the sovereign to the soil; not as a remote or nominal superior, but as the actual and direct proprietor. Such a right may have been a relic of former conquests, or in some remoter instances the growth of circumstances, similar to those which induced the natives of Africa, Peru, or New Zealand to acknowledge, on applying themselves to agriculture, the right of their sovereigns to dispose of the territory which the nation occupied. However this may be, it is certain that the Tartars have everywhere either adopted or established a political system, which unites so readily with their national habits of submission in the people, and absolute power in the chiefs: and their conquests have either introduced or re-established it, from the Black Sea to the Pacific, from Pekin to the Nerbudda. Throughout agricultural Asia (with the exception of Russia) the same system prevails. There are neither capital nor capitalists able to produce, from stores already accumulated, the maintenance of the bulk of the people. The peasant must have land to till, or must starve.

He was anxious to remain in Damaun with 200 or 300 of his relations, to assist Surwur Khaun against the Vizeerees; but his resolution occasioned great distress in the tribe, who declared it was impossible to march without their Khaun. So earnest were their representations, that Junus was at last compelled to abandon his former design, and to accompany them on their march to Khorassaun.

The body of the nation is therefore in every case dependent upon the great sovereign proprietor for the means of obtaining food. Of the remainder of the people, the most important part is, if possible, more dependent: they live, in the character of soldiers or civilians, on a portion of the revenue collected from the peasants, assigned to them by the bounty of their chief: intermediate and independent classes there are none; and great and little are literally what they describe themselves to be, the slaves of that master on whose pleasure the means of their subsistence wholly depend. The experience of many long centuries of monotonous oppression has sufficiently proved the tendency of such a state of things, once established, to perpetuate the despotism it creates.

Although a similar system prevails in all the great empires of Asia, it presents itself with distinct modifications in each; arising from differences in the climate, soil, and even government; for despotism itself has its varieties. Of these modifications a very slight sketch must suffice here.

SECTION II.

ON RYOT RENTS IN INDIA.

It seems probable that the ancient Egyptians, and the Indian worshippers of the Brahminical idols, had a common origin; but whence they came, or in what state of things their peculiar institutions originated, can only be dimly conjectured. In India ryot rents have subsisted since the invasion

of the people whom the Brahmins led or accompanied; perhaps longer. The sacred books of the Hindoos found the claims of the sovereigns to the land on the rights of conquest.

"By conquest the earth became the property of the holy Parasa Rama; by gift the property of the Sage Casyapa; and was committed by him to Cshatriyas (the military caste) for the sake of protection, because of their protective property; successively held by powerful conquerors, and not by subjects cultivating the soil. But annual property is acquired by subjects, on payment of annual revenue, and the king cannot lawfully give, sell, or dispose of the land to another for that year. But if the agreement be in this form, 'you shall enjoy it for years,' for so many years as the property is granted, during so many years the king should never give, sell, or dispose of it to another; yet if the subject pay not the revenue, the grant, being conditional, is annulled by the breach of the condition. But if no special agreement be made, and another person desirous of obtaining the land stipulate a greater revenue, it may be granted to him on his application."*

With the spirit and letter of this often quoted law the practice of the various sovereigns of India, native and foreign, has very accurately corresponded. Those subordinate rights of the people to temporary possession which have grown up in peaceful times have ever remained precarious and imperfect: but the right of the ruler is the right of the strongest; and when either intestine wars or foreign invasion have brought a new master to a

* Colebroke's Dig. of Hindoo Law, Vol. I. p. 460.

district, his sword has restored the sovereign's claim in all its primitive clearness.

The proportion of the produce taken by the sovereign has, on some ground or other, perpetually varied; that is, when he has pretended to confine himself to any definite proportion at all. The laws seem to fix it at one-sixth, but in practice this law or rule has been utterly disregarded. Strabo mentions that in his time, ἐστὶν ἡ χώρα Βασιλικὴ πᾶσα, μισθοῦ δ' αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τεταρταις ἐργάζονται τῶν καρπῶν, where by straining the Greek a little either way, the rent may appear to have been one-fourth or three-fourths of the produce. The Mogul conquerors exacted their rents in proportions which varied considerably with the quality of the land, more particularly with its command of water. But no definite rate of rent has ever prevailed long in practice.

Under the Hindoo governments there had been a disposition to allow many subordinate claims to the possession of the soil, and to offices connected with the collection of the revenue, to become hereditary. Of the offices, the most important was that of the Zemindars. These were intrusted with the collection of the revenue, in districts of different sizes, were entitled to a tenth of its amount, had sometimes lands assigned to them, and were endowed with very considerable authority. They were much in the habit of making advances of seed and stock to assist the cultivator, and of stipulating for repayment in the shape of produce. When the son had been allowed to succeed the father for some generations in such an office, the ties and interests which connected him with the people under him

were so many and strong that the displacing a Zemindar, unless for gross misconduct, or for failure in payment of the sovereign's rent, was thought by himself and the ryots to be an act of tyrannical oppression. The ryots very generally occupied their lands in common, and were collected into villages, under officers of their own, who distributed to the cultivators and tradesmen their respective shares of the produce. The village offices and various trades became hereditary. The ryot too himself, the actual cultivator, was yet less likely than the superior officers to be disturbed in the possession of his lands. Provided the sovereign's share of the produce was paid, he had no interest in disturbing the humble agents of production, and a very great interest in retaining them. From similar reasons a claim to mortgage, or sell his pos sessory interest, was suffered to establish itself.

But then all these subordinate interests were only respected in peaceful times, and under moderate governors; and these were rare in India. It has been hitherto the misfortune of that country to see a rapid succession of short-lived empires: the convulsions amidst which they were established have hardly subsided before the people have begun to be harassed by the consequences of their weakness and decay. While any really efficient general government has existed, it has been the obvious interest, and usually the aim, of the chiefs to act upon some definite system; to put some limit to their own exactions; to protect the ryots, and foster cultivation by giving reasonable security to all the interests concerned in it. The Mogul emperors acted in this spirit, while exercising a power over

the soil which had no real bounds but those which they prescribed to themselves. But as the empire grew feeble, and the subordinate chieftains, Mahometan, or Hindoo, began to exercise an uncontrolled power in their districts, their rapacity and violence seem usually to have been wholly unchecked by policy or principle. There was at once an end to all system, moderation, or protection; ruinous rents, arbitrarily imposed, were collected in frequent military circuits, at the spear's point; and the resistance often attempted in despair was unsparingly punished by fire and slaughter.

Scenes like these, in the ancient history of India, have been frequently renewed, and succeeded rapidly short intervals of repose. They were of course disastrous. Half the rich territory of that country has never been cultivated, though swarming with a population to whom the permission to make it fruitful, in moderate security, would have been happiness; and nothing can well exceed the ordinary poverty of the ryots, and the inefficiency of their means of cultivation.

The English, when they became the representatives of the Mogul emperor in Bengal, began by pushing to an extreme their rights as proprietors of the soil; and neglected the subordinate claims of the Zemindars and ryots, in a manner which was felt to be oppressive and tyrannical, although not, perhaps, in strictness, illegal. A great reaction has taken place in their views and feelings: perceiving the necessity of restoring confidence to the cultivators, and anxious to shake off the imputation of injustice and tyranny, they showed themselves quite willing to part with their character of owners of the

soil, and to retain simply that of its sovereign. An agreement was, in consequence, entered into, by which the Zemindars assumed a character which certainly never before belonged to them, that of the direct landlords of those ryots, between whom and the supreme government they had before been only agents; agents, however, possessed of many imperfect but prescriptive rights to an hereditary interest in their office. The government, instead of exacting rents, was content to receive a fixed and permanent tax, for which the new landlords were to be responsible.

There can be no doubt of the fair, and even benevolent spirit in which this arrangement was made. It seems, however, to be now generally admitted that the claims of the Zemindars were overrated, and that if something less had been done for them, and something more for the security and independence of the ryots, the settlement, without being less just or generous, would have been much more expedient.

SECTION III.

ON RYOT RENTS IN PERSIA.

Of all the despotic governments of the East that of Persia is, perhaps, the most greedy, and the most wantonly unprincipled; yet the peculiar soil of that country has introduced some valuable modifications of the general Asiatic system of ryot rents, and forced the government, unscrupulous as it is, to treat the various interests in the land subordi-

nate to those of the crown with considerable forbearance.

One of the most remarkable geological features of the old world is that great tract of sandy desert which extends across its whole breadth, and imposes a peculiar character on the tribes which roam over its surface, or inhabit its borders. It forms the shores of the Atlantic on the western coast of Africa, and constitutes the Zahara, or great sandy desert, which has contributed to conceal so long the central regions of that quarter of the globe from European curiosity. It forms, next, the surface of Egypt, with the exception of the valley of the Nile; stretches across the Arabian wastes to Syria, Persia, and upper India; and, turning from Persia northwards, threads, between Mushed and Herat,* the Elburz and Parapomisan mountains, parts of the Caucasian or Himalayan chain; runs north-eastward through Tartary, and, rounding the northern extremity of China, sinks finally, it is supposed, beneath the waves of the Pacific. The greater part of the territories of Persia either consist of this desert, or border on it; and partake so much of its parched and sterile character that the eye at a short distance can hardly trace the boundary.† This soil can be made fruitful only by irrigation. But water, says Frazer, is the most scanty boon of nature in Persia; its rivers are small and few, and rivulets, by no means common, can only be applied to a very limited quantity of cultivation. In the best districts the small proportion of culti-

* For the course of these sands on the confines of Persia and Tartary, see Frazer's Khorassan, p. 253.

† Frazer.

vated land resembles an oasis in the desert, serving by contrast to make all around it more dreary.*

As the natural springs and streams are insufficient to support the cultivation by which the people must exist, the Persians establish with great labour and expense artificial sources, called cannauts. They sink on the sides of hills long chains of wells, of different depths, and communicating by a channel, which conducts to the lowest the water collected in them: thence the stream is distributed over the fields which it is to fertilize. These works, always costly and important, are of various sizes; the chain of wells is said to be occasionally thirty-six miles in length, and a cannaut is spoken of in Chorassan, into which a horseman may ride with his lance upon his shoulder;† more ordinarily, the channels are small, and the chain of wells does not exceed two miles in length. Whenever, by these or other means, water is brought to the surface, scenes of

* Frazer, p. 163.

† This perhaps is a fable, but the cannauts must sometimes discharge very considerable bodies of water. Mr. Frazer, who first met with them at Kauzeroon, says: The cannauts or subterranean canals have frequently been described, and constitute almost the only species of improvement requiring outlay still carried on in Persia: because the property thus acquired is protected, and the profit considerable, and not very remote: indeed, they are most commonly constructed by persons in authority, who dispose of the water thus brought to the surface at very high rates. Several new ones have been lately made in the Kauzeroon valley, and some notion may be formed of the value of such property, when it is understood that the small stream at Dalakee brings in a revenue of 4000 rupees a-year; and that one cannaut, lately opened by Kulb Allee Khan, governor of Kauzeroon, affords a stream at least five or six times more considerable. Among other uses, it serves to irrigate a garden which contains some of the finest orange-trees, both bitter and sweet, shaddock, lime, and pomegranate-trees, that can be found in the country. Frazer's Khorassan, p. 79.

oriental vegetation spring up rapidly and luxuriantly. If from war, or oppression, or accident, or time, the works of man are destroyed or neglected, the scene of fertility vanishes, and the desert resumes its domain. The plain of Yezid-Khaust, in the route from Shiraz to Teheran, was once celebrated for its beauty and fertility. Mr. Frazer passed over it in 1821, and thus describes it:—"The plain of Yezid-Khaust, which extends in the line of our route all the way to Komaishah, presented, towards the latter place, a truly lamentable picture of the general decline of prosperity in Persia. Ruins of large villages, thickly scattered about, with the skeleton-like walls of caravanserais and gardens, all telling of better times, stood like memento moris to kingdoms and governments; and the whole plain was dotted over with small mounds, which indicate the course of cannauts, once the source of riches and fertility, now all choked up and dry, for there is neither man nor cultivation to require their aid."* The district of Nishapore was another celebrated seat of Persian cultivation. "It was added," says Mr. Frazer, speaking of the information he received concerning this place, "that in the different departments of Nishapore they reckon fourteen thousand distinct villages, all inhabited, and irrigated by twelve thousand cannauts, and eighteen small rivers from the mountains. This magnificent detail is no doubt greatly exaggerated, being but a reiteration of the traditional account of this place in its days of high prosperity: no such vast population or cultivation now exists; most of the villages are ruinous; the canhauts, the remains

* Frazer, p. 118.

of which, covering the plain, may serve almost to attest the truth of the above statement, are now choked up and dry." *

Now the principal revenue of the monarchs of Persia is derived from the produce of the earth, of which they are the supreme owners. It could not escape even their eyes, blinded as they are by greediness and habits of rapine, that the cost of thus wresting cultivated spots from the desert, and maintaining them in fruitfulness, would never be incurred unless the undertakers felt really secure that their property in them would be subsequently respected. By the laws of Persia, therefore, he who brings water to the surface where it never was before is guaranteed by the sovereign in the hereditary possession of the land fertilized by him; and, while a reserved rent of one-fifth of the produce is paid to the Shah, the possessor disposes of it as he pleases, and is effectually its proprietor, subject to a rent charge. If he chooses to let out the water, at money rents, to other persons who have lands which already pay the royal rent in produce, then the rent of the water is his own: the crown profits only by additional fertility thus bestowed upon spots in the produce of which it shares. Among the Persians of property, most usually those in office, making cannauts is a favourite speculation; the villagers, too, often join and construct them, and these are the best proofs that this guarantee of the sovereign is faithfully observed.

Making proper allowances, however, for the more steady respect for subordinate interests, which the outlay for artificial irrigation makes necessary on the

* Frazer, p. 405.

part of the Persian sovereigns, their management of the territory they own is very similar to what we have seen prevails in India. The ryots inhabiting villages cultivate the soil in common, or in allotments determined among themselves; their interest in the land is hereditary. "The original customary law concerning property," says Mr. Frazer, "clearly provided with much consideration for the security of the ryot. The rights of the villager were guarded at least as carefully as these of his lord: his title to cultivate his portion of land descends to him from the original commencement of the village to which he belongs, and can neither be disputed or refused him; nor can he forfeit it, nor can the lord of the village eject any ryot, while he conducts himself well, and pays his portion of the rent." *

The rent at present exacted from the ryot is one-fifth part of the produce; it has varied and been differently assessed at the discretion of different princes, more particularly Nushirvan and Timour. The Persians now state that by ancient custom only one-tenth was due: that the other tenth was agreed to be paid on a promise that the saaduraut, or irregular taxes, should cease; but that, though the additional tenth has been exacted, the taxes remain at least as oppressive as before.†

Above these hereditary cultivators is a subordinate proprietor, often called by Frazer the lord of the village, who is entitled to one-tenth of the crop. In this man the Indian Zemindar is immediately recognized: but though the word Zemindar was originally Persian, it does not appear to be in familiar use in Persia at present. The right of hereditary

* Frazer, p. 208. † Frazer, p. 211.

succession to this intermediate interest cannot have been fully recognized for any very long period. Chardin states that in his time the practice of taking leases for 99 years from the crown was only beginning to establish itself. Bernier distinctly denies that such a thing as private property in land was known in Persia. The interests of this class of men have naturally gathered strength and permanence in Persia, even more rapidly than in India, from the necessity of advances for the purposes of irrigation, which were usually made by them. Their right to the tenth of the produce seems to be now so completely severed from the duties of collection, that the jealousy of the Persian monarchs forbids them sometimes even to reside in their villages, to prevent, it is said, their tyrannizing over the ryots;* more probably to get rid of their interference in resisting the exactions of the government officers, which it is found they can do more effectually than the ryots themselves.†

There are persons in Persia who boast, perhaps with truth, that these estates, as they call them, have been in the hands of their family for a long succession of years. Did there exist a real body of landed proprietors in Persia, as secure in the possession of their heritage as these men are in their limited interests, the despotism of the Shah would at once be shackled. But men entitled to collect one-tenth of the produce from tenants hereditary like themselves, while the great sovereign proprie-

* Frazer, p. 208.

† Frazer, p. 390. The Ketkhoda (head man of the village) observed that those ryots who account with their landlords are better off than those who account directly to government, from the officers of which the poorer classes suffer great extortions.

tor is collecting a fifth at the same time, are little likely to acquire an influence in the country sufficient to protect either the subordinate ryots or themselves; and accordingly the chief weight of what is probably one of the worst governments in the world rests upon the necks of the cultivators. "There is no class of men (says Frazer) whose "situation presents a more melancholy picture of "oppression and tyranny than the farmers and cul- "tivators of the ground in Persia. They live con- "tinually under a system of extortion and injustice, "from which they have no means of escape, and "which is the more distressing because it is inde- "finite both in form and extent, for no man can tell "when, how, or to what amount, demands upon him "may without warning be made. It is upon the "farmers and peasantry that the whole extortion "practised in the country finally alights. The "king wrings from his ministers and governors; "they must procure the sums required from the "heads of districts, who in their turn demand it "from the zabuts or ketkhodahs of villages, and "these must at last squeeze it from the ryots; each "of these intermediate agents must also have their "profits, so that the sum received by the king "bears small proportion to that which is paid by "the ryots. Every tax, every present, every fine, "from whomsoever received or demanded in the "first instance, ultimately falls on them, and such "is the character of their rulers, that the only mea- "sure of these demands is the power to extort on "the one hand, and the ability to give or retain "on the other." *

* Frazer, p. 173.

SECTION IV.

ON RYOT RENTS IN TURKEY.

WHEN the Turks, after subduing the provinces of the Greek empire, finally quartered themselves upon its ruins, the foundation of their system of revenue and government, like that of other Tartar tribes, rested upon an assumption that their leader had become the legitimate proprietor of the conquered soil.

The rent imposed upon the cultivators appears to have been originally calculated at one-tenth of the gross produce: and the estimated value of each district, at that rate, was at a very early date registered in the treasury. The registers are still used in accounting with the Pachas of the different provinces. But as the rent paid by each district never varies, whatever changes take place in its cultivation, the decay of agriculture and population has loaded many of the peasants with much heavier burthens than they at first bore. One-seventh of the produce where the cultivator is a Turk, one-fifth where he is a Christian, have appeared to later travellers in Greece to be about the average actual payment to the crown.

The violence with which the Turks exemplified in practice their Asiatic notions of the supreme right of their leader to the soil will be best judged of by their next measure.

The Sultan granted a considerable portion of his proprietary rights to others, for the purpose of forming a sort of feudal militia. The officers of rank received allotments of land, called Ziamets and Ti-

mars, in which their rights represent those of the sovereign; and the number created of these exceeded 50,000. The ziamet differed from the timars only in being larger. For these grants they were bound to perform military services, with a specified number of men. Their forces constituted, till the rise of the Janissaries, the main force of the empire, and amounted, it is said, to 150,000 men. Similar grants are known in India by the name of Iaghires, in Persia by that of Teecools, but they were established less systematically in those countries than in Turkey. There these lands have never become hereditary. They are still strictly lifehold. In the early days of their institution, use was made of them to excite military emulation. On the death of the possessor, one of the bravest of his comrades was immediately appointed to his estate, and one timar has been known to be thus granted eight times in a single campaign.* The disposal of them, however, has long become wholly venal. An Aga not unfrequently purchases during his life the grant of the reversion to his family; but if he neglects to do this, his relatives are dispossessed at his death, unless they outbid all other applicants.† With the exception of these interests for life, and of the estates vested in the Ulema or expounders of Mohammedan law, there are no distinctly recognized proprietary rights in Turkey; although there, as among the ryots of India and Persia, and elsewhere throughout the East, there exist claims to the hereditary possession of land. While the peasant pays to the Sultan, or to the Aga to whose zaim or timar he belongs, the legal portion of his

* Thornton, p. 166. † Oliv. p. 192.

produce, his right to occupy and transmit his lands is not contested, and is secure, as far as anything is secure there. In Greece the lands were, before the present convulsion, very generally cultivated by the ancient mortitæ, or metayer tenants, who paid to the Agas half of their produce. Whether the lands thus cultivated consist exclusively of the domain lands attached to the Aga's timar, or whether this rent is paid in consideration of stock advanced to the rayah, to enable him to cultivate better the lands of which he is himself the hereditary tenant, I have no materials for judging. It is probable that mortitæ are found of both descriptions.

There are evidently some advantages in the Turkish system compared with those of India or Persia. The permanence and moderation of the miri or land rent is a very great one. If collected on an equitable system that rent would be no more than a reasonable land-tax, and the universal proprietorship of the Sultan would be reduced to a mere nominal or honorary superiority, like that claimed by many of the Christian monarchs of Europe. We may add, that the Turkish government has never been so wholly unequal to the task of controlling its officers as the feeble dynasties of Delhi in their decline; nor so rapacious and capricious in its own exactions as the Shahs of Persia: but its comparative moderation and strength have remained useless to its unhappy subjects, from a degree of supineness and indifference as to the malversations of its distant officers, which may be traced, partly perhaps to the bigotry which has made the Commander of the Faithful careless about

the treatment his Christian subjects received from Mahometan officers: and partly to an obstinate ignorance of the ordinary arts of civilized governments, which the vanity of the Ottomans has cherished as if it were a merit, and which their bigotry has also helped to recommend to their good opinion. Near the capital, and in the countries where the Turks themselves are numerous, there are some bounds to the oppression of the Pachas and Agas. The Turks, secure of justice if they can contrive to be heard by the superior authorities, have found the means of protecting their persons and properties by belonging to societies, which are bound, as bodies, to seek justice for the wrongs of individual members. But in the distant provinces no sect is safe. The cry of the oppressed is easily stifled, and, if faintly heard, seems habitually disregarded. The Sultan indeed abstains, with singular forbearance, from any attempts to raise the revenue paid to himself; but provided it is regularly transmitted by the Pachas of the provinces, he cares little by what means, or with what additional extortions, it is wrung from the people. The consequences are such as might be expected. The jealousy of the government allows the Pachas to remain in office but a short time; the knowledge of this inflames their cupidity, and the wretched cultivators are allowed to exist in peace upon the soil only while they submit to exactions which have no other limit than the physical impossibility of getting more from them.

Volney has accurately described the effect of this state of things in Syria and Egypt. "The abso-
"lute title of the Sultan to the soil appears to ag-

"gravate the oppression of his officers. The son "is never certain of succeeding to the father, and "the peasantry often fly in desperation from a soil "which has ceased to yield them the certainty of "even a bare subsistence. Exactions undimi- "nished in amount are demanded, and as far as "possible extorted, from those who remain; depo- "pulation goes on, the waste extends itself, and "desolation becomes permanent." It is thus that a scanty and most miserable remnant of the people are found occupying tracts which were the glory of ancient civilization; and of which the climate and the soil are such that men would multiply and would enrich, almost without effort, themselves and their masters, did the general government think fit to protect its subjects with half the energy it sometimes exerts to force the spoilers to disgorge a miserable pittance of plunder into the imperial treasury.

SECTION V.

OF RYOT RENTS IN CHINA.

We know enough of China to be aware that the sovereign is there, as elsewhere in Asia, the sole proprietor of the soil: but we hardly know enough to judge accurately of the peculiar modifications which this system of imperial ownership has received in that country. The manner in which the Chinese government assumes possession of the land, and imposes a rent upon it in the case of new conquests, is curiously illustrated by a letter of

a victorious Chinese commander to the Emperor, published by Mr. Patton.* Although one-tenth of the produce is the nominal rent in China, it is not unlikely that a very different portion is actually collected. It would be very interesting to have more multiplied and detailed observations on the practical effects of the system among the Chinese than the jealousy of the government is likely soon to give opportunity for obtaining.

The progress and effects of ryot rents in China must almost necessarily have been very different from those exhibited by India, Persia, or Turkey. In these last countries the vices of the government, and the oppression and degradation resulting from them, have left us little means of judging what might be the results of the system itself if conducted for any considerable period by an administration more mild and forbearing, and capable of giving security to the persons and property of the cultivators. In China this experiment seems to have been fairly tried. The arts of government are, to a certain extent, understood by the laboriously educated civilians, by whose hands the affairs of the empire are carried on; the country has, till very lately, been remarkably free from intestine convulsions or serious foreign wars, and the administration has been well organised, pacific, and efficient. The whole conduct, indeed, of the empire presents a striking contrast to that of the neighbouring Asiatic monarchies, the people of which, accustomed to see violence and bloodshed the common instruments of government, express great wonder at the spectacle of the Chinese states-

* Patton, 232, 233.

men upholding the authority of the state rather by the pen than the sword.* One effect we know to have followed from the public tranquillity: the spread of agriculture, and an increase of people much beyond that of the neighbouring countries. While not one half of India has ever been reclaimed, and less still of Persia, China is as fully cultivated, and more fully peopled, than most European monarchies.

Whether any class of subordinate proprietors exists between the crown and the persons paying produce rents like to the Zemindars of India, whether the persons actually liable for the produce rents are the cultivating peasants themselves, or a class above them, we have no sufficient data to determine. In some cases, at least, the actual cultivators are persons hiring the ground from those liable for the crown, and paying them half the produce.

There are abundant indications that the Chinese population has, in some parts of the empire, increased beyond the number for which the territory can produce a plentiful subsistence, and that they are in a state of the most wretched penury. The very facilities for increase which good government gives to a ryot population will usually be followed by such a consequence, if in the progress of their multiplication a certain advance has not taken place in the habits and civilization of the mass of the people. The absence of that improvement may

* Frazer, Appendix, p. 114. See Frazer's account of the Chinese administration in the provinces nearest Khorassan, and of the effect which the spectacle of that administration produced on the minds of merchants and travellers from other Asiatic states.

flow from various causes, which, in unfolding the subject of population, it will be part of our business to distinguish. We know enough of China to be sure that obstacles to the amelioration of the habits and character of the mass of the people exist in abundance there, and therefore the rapid spread of population, up to a certain point, would certainly be the first effect of a mild administration. According to Klaproth, the number of ryots (paysans contribuables), at the time of the Mantchou conquest in 1644, was registered as twenty-six millions, while all other classes were estimated at eleven millions. And since that time he calculates that the whole population has quadrupled.

The revenue of China amounts to about eighty-four millions of ounces of silver. Of this revenue about thirty-three millions is paid in money, and about fifty-one millions in grains, rice, &c., consumed, for the most part, by the local administration of the provinces. A portion only, of the value of about six millions of ounces, is annually remitted to Pekin. The receipt of this huge revenue, in the primitive shape of agricultural produce, is a striking proof that the power and means of the Emperor of China, like those of other eastern sovereigns, are intimately connected with, or rather founded on, his rights as universal proprietor of the soil.*

There are other considerable countries in Asia in which we have good reason to conclude that ryot rents prevail; consisting, first, of the countries between Hindostan and China, the Birman Empire, and its dependencies, Cochin China, &c.; and,

* Bulletin des Sciences, No. 5, Mai, 1829, p. 314.

secondly, of the states inhabited by agricultural Tartars, north of the Himalaya mountains and east of Persia, Sarmacand, Bokhara, and the states of Little Bucharia: but the peculiar modifications the system may receive in these countries, and the details of the relations there between landlord and tenant, are at present even more out of our reach than in the case of China.

SECTION VI.

MIXTURE OF OTHER RENTS WITH RYOT.

On examining, where we are able to do it minutely, the state of the countries in which ryot rents prevail, we are immediately struck with the fact, that they are sometimes mixed up with both labour rents and metayer rents. The land then presents a strange complication of interests. There is an hereditary tenant, liable to a produce rent to the crown, and by custom and prescription irremovable while he pays it. This same tenant, receiving some assistance in seed and implements, pays a second produce rent to another person, whose character fluctuates between that of an hereditary officer of the crown, and that of a subordinate proprietor; and sometimes a third rent is paid to this subordinate proprietor, in labour, exerted on land cultivated for his exclusive benefit.

To begin with the labour rents thus engrafted on ryot rents. The Ryot of Bengal often grants a plot of his ground to a ploughman who assists him. This is a pure labour rent, paid by the under-tenant. The Zemindars often demand from the

ryots themselves a certain quantity of labour, to be performed on their domain lands. This demand is often excessive, and is the source of grievous oppression and frequent complaint, both in India and Persia. When moderate, however, it is considered legal, and then forms another labour rent, paid by the ryot himself. The Agas of Turkey often force the rayahs of their Zaims or Timars to perform a certain number of days' work on their own private farms. This is unquestionably altogether an illegal exaction; but is so customary that it must be counted in practice as an additional rent.

Metayer rents too have a constant tendency to spring up and engraft themselves on ryot rents throughout Asia, wherever the moderation and efficiency of the government is such as to insure protection to the property advanced to the cultivator, or wherever the relation of the party advancing stock to the cultivator is such as to give a peculiar power of enforcing payment, and a peculiar interest in assisting cultivation. Both the government and the Zemindars in India occasionally advance seed and stock to the ryot. The government reluctantly, and only when it cannot avoid it: the lands thus cultivated on the part of government are called coss and comar; and to get them into the hands of ryots, who can cultivate themselves, seems to have been always an object of policy. The Zemindars more readily and habitually make such advances, and, as their share of the produce is then regulated wholly by their private bargain with the ryot, he no doubt is occasionally much oppressed: but this is not always the case. In Persia particularly, this arrangement is considered the best for

the tenant; because, in that country, it is only in this case that the Zemindar or subordinate proprietor undertakes to ward off the extortion of the officers of the crown, and to settle with them himself.

SECTION VII.

SUMMARY OF RYOT RENTS.

THERE is nothing mischievous in the direct effect of ryot rents. They are usually moderate; and when restricted to a tenth, or even a sixth, fifth, or fourth of the produce, if collected peacefully and fairly, they become a species of land tax, and leave the tenant a beneficial hereditary estate. It is from their indirect effects, therefore, and from the form of government in which they originate, and which they serve to perpetuate, that they are full of evil, and are found in practice more hopelessly destructive of the property and progress of the people than any form of the relation of landlord and tenant known to us.

The proprietary rights of the sovereign, and his large and practically indefinite interest in the produce, prevent the formation of any really independent body on the land. By the distribution of the rents which his territory produces, the monarch maintains the most influential portion of the remaining population in the character of civil or military officers. There remain only the inhabitants of the towns to interpose a check to his power: but the majority of these are fed by the expenditure of the sovereign or his servants. We shall have a fitter opportunity to point out how completely the

prosperity, or rather the existence, of the towns of Asia proceeds from the local expenditure of the government. As the citizens are thus destitute from their position of real strength, so the Asiatic sovereigns, having no body of powerful privileged landed proprietors to contend with, have not had the motives which the European monarchs had to nurse and foster the towns into engines of political influence, and the citizens are proverbially the most helpless and prostrate of the slaves of Asia. There exists nothing therefore in the society beneath him which can modify the power of a sovereign who is the supreme proprietor of a territory cultivated by a population of ryot peasants. All that there is of real strength in such a population looks to him as the sole source not merely of protection but of subsistence: he is by his position, and necessarily, a despot. But the results of Asiatic despotism have ever been the same: while it is strong it is delegated, and its power abused by its agents; when feeble and declining, that power is violently shared by its inferiors, and its stolen authority yet more abused. In its strength and in its weakness it is alike destructive of the industry and wealth of its subjects, and all the arts of peace; and it is this which makes that peculiar system of rents on which its power rests particularly objectionable and calamitous to the countries in which it prevails.

In countries cultivated by ryots, the wages of the main body of the people are determined by the rent they pay, as is the case, it will be remembered, under all varieties of peasant rents. The quantity of produce being determined by the fertility of the soil, the extent of his allotments of land, and the

skill, industry, and efficiency of the ryot: the division of that produce on which his wages depend is determined by his contract with the landlord, that is, by the rent he pays.

In like manner the amount of rent in such countries is determined by the amount of wages. The amount of the produce being decided as before, the landlord's share, the rent, depends upon the contract he makes with the labourer, that is, upon the amount deducted as wages.

The existence and progress of rents under the ryot system is in no degree dependent upon the existence of different qualities of soil, or different returns to the stock and labour employed on each. The sovereign proprietor has the means of enabling a body of labourers to maintain themselves, who without the machinery of the earth with which he supplies them must starve. This would secure him a share in the produce of their labour, though all the lands were perfectly equal in quality.

Ryot rents may increase from two causes: from an increase of the whole produce, effected by the greater skill, industry, and efficiency of the tenant; or from an increase of the sovereign's proportion of the produce, the produce itself remaining the same, and the tenant's share becoming less.

When the rent increases and the produce remains stationary, the increase indicates no augmentation of public wealth. There has been a transfer of wealth, but no increase of it; and one party is impoverished by the precise amount that another is enriched. But when ryot rents increase because the produce has become larger, the country is enriched by an addition of wealth to the full amount

of the increase. Its power of maintaining fleets and armies, and all the elements of public strength, have been augmented to that extent; there has been a real increase of wealth, not a mere tranfer of what before existed from one hand to another. Such an increase too indicates an augmentation of the revenues of the ryots themselves. If the tenth or sixth of the sovereign has doubled, the nine-tenths or five-sixths of the ryot have doubled also.

The increase of rents which is thus seen to go hand in hand with the improvement of the general wealth and strength is that which alone in the long run can really benefit the landlord. While an increase of produce rents has its source in greater crops, it may go on till the skill of man and the fertility of the earth have reached their maximum, that is, indefinitely. Asiatic tenants, cultivating with their own soil and climate, and the skill and energy of the best European farmers, might create produce much greater than any yet known in that quarter of the globe, and be greatly improving their own revenue while they were paying increased rents to the sovereign. And while the prosperity of the ryots thus kept pace with the increase of rents, the result would be, not merely an increase of the crops on the lands already cultivated, but the rapid spread of cultivation to other lands. A protected and thriving and increasing population would speedily reclaim the rich wastes of Turkey and India, and call back their vanished fertility to the deserted plains of Persia, multiplying at every step both the direct revenue of the sovereign landlord, and his resources in the general wealth of his people. Taking Asia as a whole, such a progress seems visionary,

but it is occasionally exhibited, on a smaller scale, in a manner which very distinctly proves it possible, and indeed easy, on the greatest.* An increase of rents derived from a stationary produce, and a diminution of the ryot's share, are unfortunately more common in Asia, and lead to no such results. In the state in which the ryots usually exist, to decrease their revenue is to injure if not to destroy their efficiency as agents of cultivation. A serious invasion of it is very usually followed, and carried to a certain extent it must be followed, by the desertion of the cultivators and the abandonment of cultivation, and a total cessation of rent. The greediness of Eastern rulers ordinarily snatches at the bait of present gain, and overlooks or disregards the very different ultimate consequences which follow the augmenting their landed revenues from the one, or from the other, of these sources of increase. Hence in a great measure the actual state of Asia, the misery of the people, the poverty and feebleness of the governments. An examination into the nature and effects of ryot rents receives an almost mournful interest from the conviction, that the political and social institutions of the people of this large division of the earth are likely for many long ages yet to come to rest upon them. We cannot unveil the future, but there is little in the character of the Asiatic population which can tempt us even to speculate upon a time when that future, with respect to them, will essentially differ from the past and the present.

* Appendix.

CHAPTER V.

COTTIER RENTS.

UNDER the head of cottier rents we may include all rents contracted to be paid in money, by peasant tenants extracting their own maintenance from the soil.

They are found to some extent in various countries; but it is in Ireland alone that they exist in such a mass as palpably to influence the general state of the country. They differ from the other classes of peasant rents in this the most materially; that it is not enough for the tenant to be prepared to give in return for the land which enables him to maintain himself a part of his labour, as in the case of serf rents, or a definite proportion of the produce, as in the case of metayer or ryot rents. He is bound, whatever the quantity or value of his produce may be, to pay a fixed sum of money to the proprietor. This is a change most difficult to introduce, and very important when introduced. Money payments from the occupiers are by no means essential, we must recollect, to the rise or progress of rents. Over by far the greater part of the globe such payments have never yet been established. Tenants yielding plentiful rents in produce may be quite unable, from the infrequency of exchanges, to pay even small sums in money;

and the owners of the land may, and do, form an affluent body, consuming and distributing a large proportion of the annual produce of a country, while it is extremely difficult for them to lay their hands on very insignificant sums in cash. Money rents, indeed, are so very rarely paid by *peasant* cultivators, that, where they do exist among them, we may expect to find the power of discharging them founded on peculiar circumstances. In the case of Ireland, it is the neighbourhood of England, and the connection between the two countries, which support the system of money rents paid by the peasantry. From all parts of Ireland, the access, direct or indirect, to the English market gives the Irish cultivators means of obtaining cash for a portion of their produce. In some districts, it even appears that the rents are paid in money earned by harvest-work in England; and it is repeatedly stated in the evidence before the Emigration Committee, that, were this resource to fail, the power of paying rents would cease in these districts at once. Were Ireland placed in a remoter part of the world, surrounded by nations not more advanced than herself, and were her cultivators dependent for their means of getting cash on her own internal opportunities of exchange; it seems highly probable, that the landlords would soon be driven by necessity to adopt a system of either labour or produce rents, similar to those which prevail over the large portion of the globe cultivated by the other classes of peasant tenantry.

Once established, however, the effects of the prevalence of cottier rents among a peasant population are important: some advantageous, some preju-

dicial. In estimating them, we labour under the great disadvantage of having to form our general conclusions from a view of a single instance, that of Ireland. Did we know nothing of labour rents but what we collect from one country, Hungary for instance, how very deficient would have been notions of their characteristics.

The disadvantages of cottier rents may be ranged under three heads. First, the want of any external check to assist in repressing the increase of the peasant population beyond the bounds of an easy subsistence. Secondly, the want of any protection to their interests from the influence of usage and prescription in determining the amount of their payments. And, thirdly, the absence of that obvious and direct common interest, between the owners and the occupiers of the soil, which under the other systems of peasant rents secure to the tenants the forbearance and assistance of their landlords when calamity overtakes them.

The first, and certainly the most important disadvantage of cottier rents is the absence of those external checks (common to every other class of peasant rents) which assist in repressing the effects of the disposition, found in all peasant cultivators, to increase up to the limits of a very scanty subsistence.

To explain this, we must, to a slight extent, anticipate the subject of population. It shall be as shortly as possible. We know that men's animal power of increase is such as to admit of a very rapid replenishing of the districts they inhabit. When their numbers are as great as their territory will support in plenty, if the effects of such

a power of increase are not diminished, their condition must get worse. If, however, the effects of their animal power of multiplication are diminished, this must happen, either from internal causes or motives, indisposing them to its full exercise, or from external causes acting independently of their will. But a peasant population, raising their own wages from the soil, and consuming them in kind, whatever may be the form of their rents, are universally acted upon very feebly by internal checks, or by motives disposing them to restraint. The causes of this peculiarity we shall have hereafter to point out. The consequence is, that unless some external cause, quite independent of their will, forces such peasant cultivators to slacken their rate of increase, they will, in a limited territory, whatever be the form of their rents, very rapidly approach a state of want and penury, and will be stopped at last only by the physical impossibility of procuring subsistence. Where labour or metayer rents prevail, such external causes of repression are found in the interests and interference of the landlords: where ryot rents are established, in the vices and mismanagement of the government:* where cottier rents prevail, no such external causes exist, and the unchecked disposition of the people leads to a multiplication which ends in wretchedness. Cottier rents, then, evidently differ for the worse in this respect from serf and metayer rents. It is not meant, of course, that serfs and metayers do not increase till their numbers and wants would alone

* Where the phenomenon can be observed of a mild and efficient government over a race of ryot tenants, as in China, they are found to increase with extraordinary rapidity.

place them very much at the mercy of the proprietors, but the obvious interests of those proprietors lead them to refuse their assent to the further division of the soil, and so to withhold the means of settling more families, long before the earth becomes thronged with a multitudinous tenantry, to which it can barely yield subsistence. The Russian or Hungarian noble wants no more serf tenants than are sufficient for the cultivation of his domain: and he refuses allotments of land to any greater number, or perhaps forbids them to marry. The power of doing this has at one time or other existed as a legal right wherever labour rents have prevailed. The owner of a domain cultivated by metayers has an interest in not multiplying his tenants, and the mouths to be fed, beyond the number necessary to its complete cultivation. When he refuses to subdivide the ground further, fresh families can find no home, and the increase of the aggregate numbers of the people is checked. The thinness of the population in ryot countries is ordinarily caused by the vices and violence of the government, and there is no question that this is what keeps so large a portion of Asia ill peopled or desolate. But when cottier rents have established themselves, the influence of the landlord is not exerted to check the multiplication of the peasant cultivators till an extreme case arrives. The first effects of the increasing numbers of the people, that is, the more ardent competition for allotments, and the general rise of rents, seem for a time unquestionable advantages to the landlords, and they have no direct or obvious motive to refuse further subdivision, or to interfere with the settlement of fresh families,

till the evident impossibility of getting the stipulated rents, and perhaps the turbulence of peasants starving on insufficient patches of land, warn the proprietors that the time is come when their own interests imperiously require that the multiplication of the tenantry should be moderated. We know, however, from the instance of Ireland, the only one on a large scale open to our observation, that while rents are actually rising, a conviction that their nominal increase is preparing a real diminution comes slowly, and is received reluctantly; and that before such a conviction begins to be generally acted upon, the cultivators may be reduced to a situation in which they are both wretched and dangerous.

The tardiness with which landlords exert their influence in repressing the multiplication of the people must be ranked then among the disadvantages of cottier when compared with serf or metayer rents.

Their second disadvantage is the want of any influence of custom and prescription in keeping the terms of the contract between the proprietors and their tenantry steady and fixed.

In surveying the habits of a serf or metayer country, we are usually able to trace some effects of ancient usage. The number of days' labour performed for the landlord by the serf remains the same, from generation to generation, in all the provinces of considerable empires. The metayer derived his old name of Colonus Medietarius from taking half the produce; and half the produce we see still his usual portion, throughout large districts containing soils of very different qualities. It is true that this influence of ancient usage does not

always protect the tenant from want or oppression; its tendency however is decidedly in his favour. But cottier rents, contracted to be paid in money, must vary in nominal amount with the variations in the price of produce: after change has become habitual, all traces of a rent, considered equitable because it is prescriptive, are wholly lost, and each bargain is determined by competition.

There can be little doubt that the tendency to constancy in the terms of their contract, observable in serf and metayer countries, is on the whole a protection to the cultivators, and that change and competition, common amongst cottiers, are disadvantageous to them.

The third disadvantage of cottier rents is the absence of such a direct and obvious common interest between landlord and tenant as might secure to the cultivator assistance when in distress.

There can be no case in which there is not, in reality, a community of interest between the proprietors of the soil and those who cultivate it; but their common interest in the other forms of peasant holding is more direct and obvious, and therefore more influential upon the habits and feelings of both tenants and landlords. The owner of a serf relies upon the labour of his tenants for producing his own subsistence; and when his tenant becomes a more inefficient instrument of cultivation, he sustains a loss. The owner of a metairie, who takes a proportion of the produce, cannot but see that the energy and efficiency of his tenant are his own gain: languid and imperfect cultivation his loss. The serf, therefore, relies upon his lord's sense of interest, or feelings of kindness for

assistance, if his crops fail, or calamity overtakes him in any shape; and he seldom is repulsed or deceived. This half-recognized claim to assistance seems, we know, occasionally, so valuable to the serfs, that they have rejected freedom from the fear of losing it. The metayers receive constantly loans of food and other assistance from the landlord, when from any causes their own resources fail. The fear of losing their stock, their revenue, and all the advances already made, prevent the most reluctant landlords from withholding aid on such occasions. Even the Ryot, miserable as he ordinarily is, and great as is the distance which separates him from the sovereign proprietor, is not always without some share in these advantages. His exertions are felt to be the great source of the revenue of the state, and under tolerably well regulated governments the importance is felt and admitted of aiding the cultivators when distressed, by forbearance, and sometimes by advances.* The interests of the cottier tenant are less obviously identified with those of the proprietor: changes of tenants, and variations of rent, are common occurrences; and the removal of an unlucky adventurer, and the acceptance of a more sanguine bidder, are expedients more easy and palatable to the proprietors, than that of mixing themselves up with the risks and burthens of cultivation by advances to their tenants. In the Highlands of Scotland, indeed, the chief assisted his clan largely. They were his kinsmen and defenders: bound to him by ties of blood, and the guardians of his personal safety. The habits engendered while these feelings were fresh are not

* Aurenzebe's Instructions to his Collectors.

yet worn out. Lord Stafford has sent to Sutherland very large supplies of food. The chief of the isle of Rumsey supported his people to such an extent, that he has lately found it worth while to expend very considerable sums in enabling them to emigrate.* But the cottier merely as such, the Irish cottier, for instance, has no such hold on the sympathies of his landlord, and there can be no question that, of the various classes of peasant tenantry, they stand the most thoroughly desolate and alone in the time of calamity: that they have the least protection from the ordinary effects of disastrous reverses, or of the failure of their scanty resources from any other causes.

Such are the disadvantages of this the least extensive system of peasant rents. The principal advantage the cottier derives from his form of tenure is the great facility with which, when circumstances are favourable to him, he changes altogether his condition in society. In serf, metayer, or ryot countries, extensive changes must take place in the whole framework of society before the peasants become capitalists, and independent farmers. The serf has many stages to go through before he arrives at this point, and we have seen how hard it is for him to advance one step. The metayer too must become the owner of the stock on his farm, and be able to undertake to pay a money rent. Both changes take place slowly and with difficulty, especially the last, the substitution of money rents, which supposes a considerable previous improvement in the internal commerce of the nation, and is ordinarily the result, not the commencement, of

* See Emigration Report.

improvement in the condition of the cultivators. But the cottier is already the owner of his own stock, he exists in a society in which the power of paying money rents is already established. If he thrives in his occupation, there is nothing to prevent his enlarging his holding, increasing his stock, and becoming a capitalist, and a farmer in the proper sense of the word. It is pleasing to hear the resident Irish landlords, who have taken some pains, and made some sacrifices, to improve the character and condition of their tenantry, bearing their testimony to this fact, and stating the rapidity with which some of the cottiers have, under their auspices, acquired stock, and become small farmers. Most of the countries occupied by metayers, serfs, and ryots will probably contain a similar race of tenantry for some ages. If the events of the next half century are favourable to Ireland, her cottiers are likely to disappear, and to be merged in a very different race of cultivators. This facility for gliding out of their actual condition to a higher and a better is an advantage, and a very great advantage, of the cottier over the other systems of peasant rents, and atones for some of its gloomier features.

Making allowances for the peculiarities pointed out, the effects of cottier rents on the wages of labour, and other relations of society, will be similar to those of other peasant rents. The quantity of produce being determined by the fertility of the soil, the extent of the allotment, and the skill and industry of the cottier; the division of that produce on which his wages depend is determined by his contract with the landlord—by the rent he pays. And again, the whole amount of produce being

determined as before, the landlord's share, the rent, depends upon the maintenance left to the peasant, that is, upon his wages.

The existence of rent, under a system of cottier tenants, is in no degree dependent upon the existence of different qualities of soil, or of different returns to the stock and labour employed. Where, as has been repeatedly observed, no funds sufficient to support the body of the labourers are in existence, they must raise food themselves from the earth, or starve; and this circumstance would make them tributary to the landlords, and give rise to rents, and, as their number increased, to very high rents, though all the lands were perfectly equal in quality.

Cottier rents, like other peasant rents, may increase from two causes; first, from an increase of the whole produce, of which increase the landlord takes the whole or a part. Or, the produce remaining stationary, they may increase from an augmentation of the landlord's share, that of the tenant being diminished to the exact amount of the additional rent.

When the rent increases and the produce remains stationary, the increase of rent indicates no increase of the riches and revenue of the country: there has been a transfer of wealth, but no addition to it: one party is impoverished to the precise amount to which another is enriched.

When, on the other hand, increased rents are paid by increased produce, there is an addition to the wealth of the country, not a mere transfer of that already existing: the country is richer to the extent, at least, of the increased rent; and, pro-

bably, to a greater extent from the increased revenue of the cultivators.

It is obviously the interest of the landlord of cottier, as of other peasant tenants, that an increase of his rents should always originate in the prosperity of cultivation, not in pressure on the tenants. The power of increase from the last source is very limited: from improvement, indefinite.

It is clearly too the interest of the landlord, that the cottier tenantry should be replaced by capitalists capable of pushing cultivation to the full extent to which skill and means can carry it; instead of the land being intrusted to the hands of mere labourers, struggling to exist, unable to improve, and, when much impoverished by competition, degraded, turbulent, and dangerous.

As it is proposed to consider the present condition of both the Irish and English poor at the end of the work, when we shall have the assistance of all the more general principles we shall venture to unfold, the subject of cottier rents need not be farther pursued here. They have already been sufficiently examined to show the points in which they will agree with or differ from other peasant rents.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY OF PEASANT RENTS.

INFLUENCE OF RENT ON WAGES.

ONE important fact must strike us forcibly on looking back on the collective body of those primary or peasant rents which we have been tracing, in their various forms, over the surface of the globe. It is their constant and very intimate connection with the wages of labour.

In this respect the serf, the metayer, the ryot, the cottier, are alike: the terms on which they can obtain the spot of ground they cultivate exercise an active and predominant influence in determining the reward they shall receive for their personal exertions, or, in other words, their real wages. We should take a very false view of the causes which regulate the amount of their earnings, if we merely calculated the quantity of capital in existence at any given time, and then attempted to compute their share of it by a survey of their numbers. As they produce their own wages, all the circumstances which affect either their powers of production, or their share of the produce, must be taken into the estimate: and among these, principally, those circumstances which we have seen distinguish one set

of peasant tenantry from another. The mode in which their rent is paid, whether in labour, produce, or money; the effects of time and usage in softening, or exaggerating, or modifying, the original form or results of their contract; all these things, and their combined effects, must be carefully examined and well considered before we can expect to understand what it is which limits the wages of the peasant, and fixes the standard of his condition and enjoyments.

While, then, the position of a large proportion of the population of the earth continues to be, what it has ever yet been, such as to oblige them to extract their own food with their own hands from its bosom, the form and condition of peasant tenures, and the nature and amount of the rents paid under them, will necessarily exercise a leading influence on the condition of the labouring classes, and on the real wages of their labour.

INFLUENCE OF PEASANT RENTS ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

The next remarkable effect, common to all the forms of peasant rents, is their influence in preventing the full development of the productive powers of the earth.

If we observe the difference which exists in the productiveness of the industry of different bodies of men, in any of the various departments of human exertion, we shall find that difference to depend, almost wholly, on two circumstances: first, on the quantity of contrivance used in applying manual labour; secondly, on the extent to which the mere physical exertions of men's hands are assisted by

the accumulated results of past labour; in other words, on the different quantities of skill, knowledge, and capital brought to the task of production. A difference in these occasions all the difference between the productive powers of a body of savages and those of an equal body of English agriculturists or manufacturers; and it occasions also the less striking differences which exist between the productive powers of the various bodies of men who occupy gradations between these two extremes.

When the earth is cultivated under a system of peasant rents, the task of directing agriculture, and of providing what is necessary to assist its operations, is either thrown wholly upon the peasants, as in the case of ryot and cottier rents, or divided between them and their landlords, as in the case of serf and metayer rents. In neither of these cases is the efficiency of agricultural industry likely to be carried as far as it might be. Poverty, and the constant fatigues of laborious exertion, put both science, and the means of assisting his industry by the accumulation of capital, out of the reach of the peasant: and when the landlords have once succeeded in getting rid in part of the burthen of cultivation, and have formed a body of peasant tenantry, it is in vain to hope for much steady superintendance or assistance from them. The fixed and secure nature of their property, and the influence which it gives them in the early stages of society over the cultivating class, that is, over the great majority of the nation, lead to the formation of feelings and habits inconsistent with a detailed attention to the conduct of cultivation; while

they very rarely possess the power and the temper steadily to accumulate the means of assisting the industry employed on their estates. Some skill and some capital must be found among the very rudest cultivators; but the most efficient direction of labour, and the accumulation and contrivance of the means to endow it with the greatest attainable power, seem to be the peculiar province, the appointed task, of a race of men, capitalists, distinct from both labourers and landlords, more capable of intellectual efforts than the lower, more willing to bring such efforts to bear on the improvement of the powers of industry than the higher, of those classes. On the peculiar functions of this third class of men in society, and of the various effects, moral, economical, and political, produced by the multiplication of their numbers and their means, we shall hereafter have to treat. Their absence from the task of cultivation, which is common to all the wide classes of peasant tenures, prevents that perfect development of the resources of the earth, which their skill, their contrivance, and the power they exercise by the employment of accumulated resources, do and can alone effect.

SMALL NUMBERS OF THE NON-AGRICULTURAL CLASSES.

Resulting from this imperfect development of the powers of the earth, will be found a stunted growth of the classes of society unconnected with the soil. It is obvious that the relative numbers of those persons who can be maintained without agricultural labour must be measured wholly by the productive powers of the cultivators. Where these cultivate skilfully, they obtain produce to maintain

themselves and many others; where they cultivate less skilfully, they obtain produce sufficient to maintain themselves and a smaller number of others. The relative numbers of the non-agricultural classes will never be so great, therefore, where the resources of the earth are developed with deficient or moderate skill and power, as they are when these resources are developed more perfectly. In France and Italy the agriculture of the peasant tenantry is good when compared with that of similar classes elsewhere, and the soil and climate are, on the whole, excellent; yet the number of non-agriculturists is in France only as 1 to 2, in Italy as 4 to 13, while in England, with an inferior soil and climate (agricultural climate, that is), the non-agriculturists are to the cultivators as 2 to 1.* The relative numbers and influence of the non-agricultural classes powerfully affect, as we have had occasion before to remark, the social and political circumstances of different countries, and, indeed, mainly decide what materials each country shall possess for the formation of those mixed constitutions in which the power of the crown and of a landed aristocracy are balanced and controlled by the influence of numbers and of property, freed from all dependence on the soil.

I shall not be understood, of course, as meaning to assert that the presence of a large proportion of non-agriculturists is essential to the existence of democratic institutions: we have abundance of in-

* In England, too, a larger number of animals are kept for pleasure and a variety of purposes unconnected with cultivation: the power of feeding these must be reckoned when we are calculating the efficiency of her agriculture.

stances to the contrary. But when a powerful aristocracy already exists on the soil, as where peasant rents prevail. it needs must; then the efficient introduction of democratic elements into the constitution depends almost entirely upon the numbers and property of the non-agricultural classes. The indirect influence of peasant tenures, therefore, in limiting the numbers of the non-agricultural classes, must be reckoned among the most important of the political results of those tenures.

IDENTITY OF THE INTERESTS OF LANDLORDS WITH THOSE OF THEIR TENANTRY AND THE COMMUNITY.

A little attention is sufficient to show, that under all the forms of peasant tenures, the interests of the landlords are indissolubly connected with those of their tenantry and of the community at large. The interest of the state obviously is, that the resources of its territory should be fully developed by a class of cultivators free, rich, and prosperous, and therefore equal to the task. The interest of the tenant must ever be to increase the produce of the land, on which produce he feeds; to shake off the shackles of servile dependence; and to attain that form of holding which leaves him most completely his own master, and presents the fewest obstructions to his accumulation of property.

The interests of the landed proprietor concur with these interests of the state and the tenantry.

There is, indeed, a method by which his revenue may be increased, neither beneficial to the community nor advantageous to the tenant; that is, by encroaching on the tenant's share of the produce,

while the produce itself remains unaltered. But this is a limited and miserable resource, which contains within itself the principles of a speedy stoppage and failure. That full development of the productive powers of a territory which is essential to the progressive rise of the proprietor's income can never be forwarded by the increasing penury of the cultivators. While the peasant is the agent or principal instrument of production, the agriculture of a country can never thrive with his deepening depression. If the waste plains of Asia and the forests of eastern Europe are ever to produce to their proprietors a revenue at all like what similar quantities of land yield in the better cultivated parts of the world, it is not by increasing the penury of the race of peasantry by which they are now loosely occupied that such a result will be brought about. Their increased misery can only stay the spread of cultivation and diminish its powers. The miserable scantiness of the produce of a great part of the earth is visibly mainly owing to the actual poverty and degradation of the peasant cultivators. But the real interest of the proprietors never can be to snatch a small gain from a dwindling fund, which, at every invasion of theirs, is less likely to be augmented, when they might insure a progressive increase from the indefinite augmentation of the fund itself. It is obviously, therefore, most advantageous to the proprietors that their revenues should increase from the increasing produce of the land, and not from the decreasing means of its cultivators; and so far their interest is clearly the same with that of the state and the peasantry.

And further, it is no less the interest of the landlords than it is that of other classes in the state, that the ruder and more oppressive forms of his contract with his tenant should gradually be exchanged for others more consistent with the social and political welfare of the cultivators. The landlord who receives labour rents must be a farmer himself; the landlord of the metayer must support most of the burthens of cultivation, and share in all its hazards; the landlord of the cottier must be exposed to frequent losses from the failure of the means of his tenantry, and, after a certain point in their depression, to considerable danger from their desperation. All the advantages incident to the position of a landed proprietor are only reaped in their best shape when his income is fixed and (extraordinary casualties excepted) certain; when he is free from any share in the burthens and hazards of cultivation; when, with the progress of national improvement, his property has its utmost powers of production brought into full play by a race of tenants possessed of intellect and means equal to the task. The receiver of labour rents, therefore, gains a point when they are changed to produce rents; the receiver of produce rents from a metayer gains a point when they are changed to money rents. The landlord of cottiers gains a point when they become capitalists; and the sovereign of the ryot cultivators gains a point when the produce due from them can be commuted for fixed payments in money. There is no one step in the prosperous career of a peasant tenantry, of any description, at which the interests of the landlords are not best promoted by their prosperity: and that in spite of

the admitted possibility of a stinted gain to the proprietors, founded on the increasing penury of the cultivators.

ON THE CAUSES OF THE LONG DURATION OF THE SYSTEMS OF PRIMARY OR PEASANT RENTS.

Perhaps in an inquiry into the nature and effects of the different systems of peasant rents, the most interesting tract in the whole line of investigation is that in which we seek to discover the causes which have kept them permanent and unchanged, over a large part of the earth, through a long succession of ages.

The interests of the state, of the proprietors, of the tenantry themselves, are all advanced by the progressive changes which, in prosperous communities, successively take place in the mode of cultivating the soil. And yet, in spite of the ordinary tendency of human institutions to change, and of the numerous interests which in this instance combine to make change desirable, ages have travelled past, and a great portion of the earth's surface is still tilled by races of peasantry holding the land by tenures and on conditions similar to those imposed upon the persons in whose hands the task of cultivation was first placed. Such are the serfs of the east, the metayers who cover the west, of Europe, and the ryots who occupy the whole of Asia.

When we look at those countries in which peasant rents have at any time prevailed, and observe their actual condition with reference to past or probable changes, those rents show themselves in four unequal masses. From the *first* division they

have already passed; spontaneous changes gradually brought about, in slow succession, have obliterated all marks of the earlier and ruder forms of holding. A race of capitalists providing the stock, advancing the wages of labour, and paying fixed money rents, have taken entire possession of the task of cultivation, from which the proprietors are completely extricated. The portion of the earth's surface on which this has taken place is small. It comprises England, the greater part of Scotland, a part of the kingdom of the Netherlands, and spots in France, Italy, Spain, and Germany. In *another* part of the globe we see the causes which have elsewhere produced the changes just referred to still actually at work, but their results yet incomplete. Without any deliberate purpose on the part of any class, changes are quietly and silently taking place, through which the agricultural population are advancing to a position similar to that of the English farmers and labourers. This process may be observed in the west of Germany: there the serfs have, for some ages, been going through a sluggish process of transmutation into leibeigeners, hereditary tenants with fixed labour rents, and not chained to the soil. The leibeigeners are slowly assuming the character of meyers, subject to an unalterable produce rent; a very few steps in advance will range the meyer by the side of the English copyholder; and then all the substantial effects of their former condition, as tenants paying labour rents, will have disappeared.

There is this material difference, however, between the past state of England and the present state of Germany. In England the tenants who,

on the disuse of the labour of the serf tenantry, took charge of the cultivation of the domains of the proprietors, were found on the land; they were yeomen. In Germany the tenants of the domains are offsets from the non-agricultural population, and their capital has been accumulated in employments distinct from agriculture. In England the source from which the new tenantry proceeded was large, and their spread rapid. In Germany the source is smaller, and the creation of such a tenantry must be the work of a much longer period. But the change has been slow in both countries. Cultivation by the labour of the manerial tenants was very long before it finally disappeared from England: the legal obligation to perform such labour has glided out of sight almost within memory. So too, in those parts of Germany in which the progress of the relations between the proprietors and the tenantry is left to take its own course, it seems highly probable that a very long period will yet elapse before labour rents wholly disappear. Spontaneous changes in the habits of nations usually take place slowly, and occupy ages in their progress.

Gradual alterations in the mode of holding and cultivating land, occupied by a peasant tenantry, are not confined to the countries in which labour rents prevail: metayers have, in some districts, given place to capitalist tenants, and in others are to be found in a state of transition; owning part of the capital, paying sometimes a fixed quantity of produce, sometimes a money rent, and preparing, evidently, to take upon themselves all the burthens and hazards of cultivation.

The two divisions of rents which we have just noticed comprise, jointly, but a small portion of the earth. In them, as we have seen, a movement in advance of the cultivators themselves has taken place, which has proceeded from the insensible improvement of their condition, and has ended in one, and is likely to end in the other, in an alteration in the form of rents. But in that greater portion of the earth which remains to be noticed, there has been no spontaneous movement in advance, and there is no tendency to insensible change to be perceived. Yet in a small division of that larger portion very rapid alterations are in progress, in a different manner, and from a different cause. And this constitutes a *third* division of peasant rents, when classed with reference to their tendencies to change.

In the eastern part of Europe the people have never reached the means, or even the wish, of elevating their condition: the mode of cultivation, and the relations between the proprietors and their tenantry, might, apparently, as far as the exertions of the cultivators themselves are concerned, have continued unchanged while the earth lasts.

But, in these countries, the intellect and knowledge of the higher classes are far in advance of the apathy, and stationary ignorance, of the lower. The landed proprietors have been able to contrast the condition of their country and their property with the state of more improved nations, and have become animated by a zealous desire of altering the condition of the peasantry, and the mode of conducting agriculture. This common spirit has produced, and is daily producing, a variety of

changes; differing in detail with the actual circumstances of different districts, but having two common objects; namely, the elevation of the character and circumstances of the present peasant cultivators, and the improvement of agriculture on the domains held by the proprietors.

We have already seen, that the ultimate results of these various changes are yet problematical; that whatever they may be, a long period of time will probably elapse before they are fully developed.

Abstracting, however, altogether from the three districts we have been considering; namely, that in which peasant rents have been actually superseded, that from which they are slowly disappearing, and that from which an attempt is making forcibly to expel them; there still remains a large *fourth* district: a vast unbroken mass, which no movement from within, and no influence from without, have yet brought to give signs of approaching change.

As the attention is naturally more caught by what is stirring and in motion than by things of greater magnitude and importance which are inert and stationary, the countries in which alterations in the mode of conducting agriculture are in progress attract observation much more readily than those which really present a more curious and interesting phenomenon; those in which the forms of occupying the soil first adopted, and the systems and relations of society founded on them, still prevail; in which the face of society has undergone for centuries as little alteration as the face of nature, and men seem as unchangeable as the regions they inhabit. The Ryots throughout Asia, and the peasants in a very

considerable portion of Europe, are precisely what they have ever been. In spite of the fluctuations natural to all human institutions, and of the obvious disadvantages of their systems of cultivation, still they endure, and are likely to endure, unless some general movement takes place on the part of the higher classes, dragging the lower from their apathy and poverty; or some insensible improvement of their condition enables the lower classes themselves to begin a forward progress.

Efforts of the higher classes to introduce forcibly improvements into the condition of the lower are little likely ever to become general and systematic over any great proportion of the earth's surface. To suppose a general diffusion of political knowledge and philosophy, dispelling everywhere the sluggish dreams of selfishness, may be a pleasing reverie, but can hardly afford any ground for rational anticipation. The proprietors of the serfs of eastern Europe have made, it is true, vigorous efforts, but they were stimulated by the intolerable burthens and embarrassments which the old system brought upon themselves, and nothing short of such a stimulus would make such efforts general. The Italian or Spanish nobles show no symptoms of being roused to take the lead in altering the terms on which their estates are used: even the French noblesse, before the Revolution, were quite passive under the evils and losses which the condition of their metayer tenantry made common. The native princes of Asia are little likely to be reformers in the agricultural economy of their country. We see how little the Anglo-Indian government has effected in this respect.

But if the higher classes are little likely to display general activity as reformers, then, as the foundation of future improvements in the circumstances of the cultivators of a large part of the world, there remain only such alterations for the better as may insensibly take place in the condition of the lower classes: such benefits as they may win for themselves amidst the silent lapse of time and every-day events.

If this is seen, it must be perceived at once, that the actual state of penury and misery which makes the cultivators helpless, and keeps them destitute, is the great obstacle to the commencement of national improvement; the heavy weight which keeps stationary the wealth and number and civilization of a very large part of the earth. I believe this, indeed, to be only one case of a general truth, with which, in our future progress, we shall become more familiar, that the degradation and abject poverty of the lower classes can never be found in combination with national wealth and political strength. But when the lower classes exist in the character of peasant cultivators, this is more strikingly true than elsewhere. In poor countries, of which the non-agricultural population bears a very small proportion to the husbandmen, it is usually in vain to expect, that the additional capital and skill necessary to effect great national improvements in cultivation can be generated anywhere but on the land itself, and among its actual occupiers. If once, therefore, the peasantry are so far reduced in their circumstances and character as to have neither the means, nor, after a time, the wish or hope, to acquire property and improve their condition, the

state of agricultural production, and the relative numbers of the non-agricultural and other classes, must be nearly stationary; and, under such circumstances, all plans for the advancement of agriculture, and improvement of the condition of the peasants, which are not founded on the principle that the means of the cultivator are to be, *in the first place,* enlarged, prove, almost necessarily, abortive. Laws which confer upon him political rights and security are in themselves a mere dead letter while poverty weighs him down, and keeps him fast in his position. The French metayers had long ceased to be subject to the arbitrary power of the proprietors; their persons and properties were, with some exceptions, as secure as those of any class in France; yet their condition, and the character of their cultivation, were, at best, stationary, and, in some districts, certainly declining. It was the one great object of the French economists to substitute for this class of cultivators capitalists paying money rents; and the fault of their plans, for accomplishing their purpose, was this, that instead of recommending measures for the general transformation of the metayers themselves into capitalists, they founded all their hopes of effecting the change they thought so all-important on the removal of the metayers, and the gradual spread of capitalists, from the districts in which they had already established themselves. This was a process which could only have gone on at all under a very favourable state of the markets for agricultural produce, and which, it will be clear, must have taken ages to complete, if we consider the small part of France occupied by capitalists, and the very large proportion of her

surface tilled by metayers. The transformation of the metayers themselves was less difficult, but it was opposed by the moral obstacle we are speaking of, which forms the real impediment to the progress of improvement under all the forms of peasant rent. It required a distinct sacrifice of immediate income, on the part of the proprietors or the government. The metayers were oppressed by taxes, more than by rent: the share of the landlord in the produce had never been increased; but the exactions of government from the tenant's portion had reduced him to the state of misery which Turgot describes. To enable the cultivators then to amend their circumstances, to accumulate, and ultimately to change their form of holding, it was necessary to begin by lightening the actual pressure on them: to effect this, either the government must have remitted part of its taxes, or the proprietors have consented to pay part of them, and to relinquish thus a part of their own revenue. On the side of the state, public necessity, partly real, and partly assumed by ministers who did not foresee to what point they were driving the population; on the part of the proprietors, what Turgot is pleased to call the illusions of self-interest ill understood prevented such a remission of the burthens of the peasantry as might have enabled them to make a start in advance: they continued therefore poor, inefficient, stationary; and the agricultural resources of the state were stunted and stopped in their growth with the peasantry. In spite of the miseries of that revolution, through which the freedom of the cultivators from their ancient oppressions has been earned, the revenues of the body of agricul-

turists have so increased, that France consumes more than three times the quantity of manufactured commodities she did before the Revolution, and her non-agricultural population has doubled. These facts tell at once how much she lost in strength and wealth by the feebleness of the agricultural efforts of the peasantry under the old regime. But convulsions like that which in France destroyed the relations between landlord and tenant, and converted a large portion of the metayers into small proprietors, are not to be counted on in the ordinary course of human affairs; and when once either the exactions of landlords, or of the state, or indeed any other circumstances, have reduced a peasant tenantry to penury, the same difficulty constantly opposes itself to the commencement of improvement. No one is willing to make, no one ordinarily thinks of making, a direct sacrifice of revenue for the purpose of augmenting their actual means; and nothing short of that will enable them to start. In India, the Anglo-Indian government have been creditably ready to give more security and more civil rights to their Indian subjects than they before enjoyed; but when it became a question of direct sacrifice of revenue, notwithstanding the clearest conviction in their own minds that the population would be increased, cultivation improved, and the wealth and resources of their territories rapidly multiplied, still the exigencies of the government would not permit them to remit the actual rents to the amount of 25 per cent., or 15 per cent., even to insure all these confessed ulterior advantages; and therefore they concluded that the state of culti-

vation, and the poverty of the tenantry, must continue as they were.*

From the same causes, the posterity of the emancipated serfs of eastern Europe are shut out from the possibility of forming a body of capitalist tenants fitted to take charge of the cultivation of the domains of the proprietors. Personal freedom, hereditary possession of their allotments, rights and privileges in abundance, the landlords and sovereigns are willing to grant; and it would be extravagant to say these grants are worth nothing: but that which is necessary to enable the peasants to profit by their new position, that is, an *immediate* relaxation of the pressure upon them, an increasé of their revenue, proceeding from a direct sacrifice of income on the part of either the crown or the landlord, is something much more difficult to be accomplished. In Prussia the rent charge fixed upon the serf, now constituted a proprietor, forms, as we have seen, one of the heaviest rents known in Europe. And among the various schemes for improving the condition of the peasantry afloat in the east of Europe, I know but of one, that of the Livonian nobility, in which a direct sacrifice of revenue on the part of the landlords is contemplated as the basis of the expected amelioration.†

It is unquestionably the actual penury of the peasants, and the little which has been done to enable them to take the first steps to emerge from

* See Buchanan's edition of Smith, Appendix.

† In that instance, the tenant who before owed half his labour to the landlord is protected against the demand of more than two days in the week, or one-third.

it, which have, in a great measure, frustrated all the hopes of augmented wealth and improved civilization which have been entertained by the benevolent reformers of the north. It is this, too, which has been the cause of the apathy with which the peasant has received the gift of political rights, and which has made the various boons bestowed upon him almost nominal.

Abstracting then from the efforts of landlords or governments, and looking at the whole extent of that part of the globe which is at present languishing under the inefficient efforts of a depressed peasant tenantry, it appears that, when once their circumstances have become reduced and their poverty extreme, nothing but a relaxation of the terms of their contract with the landlord, or a diminution of the burthens imposed by the state, can give them an opportunity of making that first movement in advance which must be the initiative of their new career. The difficulty of procuring such a relaxation, arising often from the necessities or the blindness, more rarely from the pure selfishness, of the landlords or sovereigns, is the real cause of the stagnation and inefficiency of the art of agriculture, and of the duration of the present forms of holding over a great part of the world. In the hands of a peasantry thoroughly depressed, cultivation may spread, but its powers will not increase; the people may multiply, but the relative numbers of the non-agricultural classes will not become much greater; and abstracting from the increase of gross numbers, the wealth and strength of the population, and the elements of political institutions, undergo no alteration.

Such, then, is the miserable cause which has maintained the rude forms of primitive holding so long and so extensively unchanged, and which seems unhappily to promise them a long period of future dominion, over too many wide districts of the earth.

We may observe on some small spots, of which England is one, the effects of a different system. Agriculture is further advanced towards perfection, and hence arises a capacity of supporting much more numerous non-agricultural classes, which afford abundant and excellent materials for a balanced form of government; hence too, intellect, knowledge, leisure, and all the indications and elements of high civilization multiplied and concentrated. Were the whole of the earth's surface cultivated with like efficiency, how different would be the aggregate of the commercial means, political institutions, the intellect and civilization of the inhabitants of our planet!

The advancing wealth of a body of peasantry does not, however, always lead either to the permanent improvement of their own condition, or to an alteration in the constituent elements of society, or in the degree of its civilization. A rapid increase of the numbers of the cultivators, and after a time a peasantry equally poor as at first, and more numerous, are sometimes the result of an augmentation of the revenues of a peasant tenantry. More than one favourable circumstance must concur, to make the commencement of their prosperity a basis for a general advance of the nation, and for the progressive augmentation of its various elements of its strength and civilization. What those circumstances are we shall have hereafter to ob-

serve when examining the causes which at different stages, and in different positions of society, promote or retard improved habits in the body of the people. At present it is enough if we see that the long endurance and stationary state of peasant tenures over a great part of the world are mainly attributable to the state of poverty in which the cultivators have so long found themselves:—a state of poverty which while it lasts effectually prevents any movements in advance from originating with the peasants themselves, and which can only be relieved by such sacrifices on the part of other classes as they are rarely able and willing to make.

While we have been reviewing the different classes of peasant rents, those facts have been studiously dwelt upon and re-produced, which show that improvement in the efficiency of agriculture, followed by an increase of the territorial produce of a country, and consequently of its general wealth and strength, is the foundation on which a permanent and progressive increase in the revenues of the landed proprietors can best sustain itself.

Strange opinions as to a necessary opposition between the interests of the proprietors of the soil and those of the rest of the community and of the state have lately been current. The fallacy of these it was thought would be more easily and more distinctly exposed by a simple exposition of facts as they exist in the world around us, than by following those who have promulgated such opinions into a labyrinth of abstract argument. The dogmas alluded to are sufficiently familiar to all readers of later writers on Political Economy. Their substance and their spirit may be collected from the

following passages. "The capacity of a country "to support and employ labourers is in no degree "dependent on advantageousness of situation, rich- "ness of soil, or extent of territory."* "It ap- "pears therefore, that in the earliest stages of "society, and where only the best lands are culti- "vated, *no rent is ever paid.* The landlords, as "such, do not begin to share in the produce of the "soil until it becomes necessary to cultivate lands "of an inferior degree of fertility, or to apply "capital to the superior lands with a diminishing "return. Whenever this is the case, rent *begins* "to be paid; and it continues to increase according "as cultivation is extended over poorer soils; and "diminishes according as those poorer soils are "thrown out of cultivation."† "An increase of "rent is not, therefore, as is very generally sup- "posed, occasioned by improvements in agriculture, "or by an increase in the fertility of the soil. It "results *entirely* from the necessity of resorting, "as population increases, to soils of a decreasing "degree of fertility. Rent varies in an inverse "proportion to the amount of produce obtained "by means of the capital and labour employed "in cultivation, that is, it increases when the "profits of *agricultural labour diminish, and dimi-* "*nishes when they increase.*"‡ "The rise of rent "is *always* the effect of the increasing wealth "of the country, and of the *difficulty* of providing "for its augmented population. It is a symptom, "but it is never a cause of wealth."§ "*Nothing*

* Macculloch's Principles of Political Economy, p. 327.
† Ibid. p. 282. ‡ Ibid. p. 269.
§ Ricardo's Political Economy, 2nd Edit. p. 62.

"can raise rent but a demand for new land of an "inferior quality, or some cause which shall occa- "sion an alteration in the relative fertility of the "land already under cultivation."* "The interest "of the landlord is *always* opposed to that of the "consumer and manufacturer."† "The dealings "between the landlord and the public are not like "dealings in trade, whereby both the seller and "the buyer may equally be said to gain, but the "loss is wholly on one side, and the gain wholly on "the other."‡ "Rent then is a creation of value, "but not a creation of wealth; it adds nothing to "the resources of a country, it does not enable it "to maintain fleets and armies; for the country "would have a greater disposable fund if its "lands were of a better quality, and it could em- "ploy the same capital without generating a rent. "It must then be admitted that Mr. Sismondi and "Mr. Buchanan, for both their opinions were sub- "stantially the same, were correct when they con- "sidered rent as a value purely nominal, and as "forming no addition to the national wealth, but "merely as a transfer of value, advantageous only "to the landlords, and proportionably injurious to "the consumer."§

The utter fallacy of these opinions, when applied to any class of peasant rents, has been shown separately for each class in the course of the remarks which have already been made: viz. for labour rents, at p. 16, for metayers, at p. 67, for ryots, at p. 102, and for cottier rents at p. 134.

* Ricardo's Political Economy, 2nd Edit. p. 518.
† Ibid. p. 423. ‡ Ibid. p. 424.
§ Ibid. 2nd Edit. p. 501.

But let us for a moment picture to ourselves the effects of an address, by a philosopher of this school, to an assembly composed of sovereign proprietors of territories occupied by ryots, and of the landholders of countries cultivated by serfs, metayers, or cottiers. He would assure them, from Mr. Macculloch, that the extent and richness of the tracts of country they might own affected in *no degree* their power of supporting and employing an industrious population: that in the earliest stages of society (being those with which they are the most familiar) no rents are ever paid: that they only begin to be paid when it becomes necessary to cultivate lands of an inferior degree of fertility. He would further inform the landholders. that no improvements of their income could ever by possibility originate in improvements in agriculture, or in an increased fertility of the soil. He would tell them too, that every augmentation of their rental must result *entirely* from the necessity of resorting, as population increased, to soils of a decreasing degree of fertility. That the decrepitude of agriculture, and the prosperity of the owners of the land, advanced always hand in hand; that their revenues must vary always in an inverse proportion to the amount of produce obtained by means of the capital and labour employed in cultivation, and that their rents, therefore, would increase as the profits of agricultural labour diminished, and would diminish as the profits of agricultural labour increased.

The teacher might next take Mr. Ricardo's for his text-book, and after enforcing his dogmas from this parent source, he might proceed farther with

his revelations, and expound to his audience, that their interests as landlords were always opposed to those of the non-agricultural classes of the community, that the increase of their share of the produce of the soil was a creation of value but not a creation of wealth; that such an increase added nothing to the general stock of riches, nothing to the common resources of the state, nothing to its ability to maintain its public establishments.

We may imagine surely the amazement of the listening circle of landholders of various descriptions They would know that they were surrounded, as their forefathers had been, by a peasant population yielding a part of their produce or their labour, as a tribute for the use of the ground from which they raised their food, and to which they must cling or die. The lords of the soil would feel therefore that their revenue, as landed proprietors, owed neither its origin nor its continuance to the existence of gradations in the qualities of land. They would know that. as far as their experience had gone, with improvements in agriculture, and with the increase of the fertility of the soil, the amount of produce which formed their annual rents had steadily increased, and they would have found that they became wealthier as the labour of their peasant tenantry produced more from the earth, and that they became poorer as it produced less. It would be impossible for them to doubt that their power of giving employment and support to a population of labouring cultivators depended mainly on the quantity and quality of the land at their disposal. They could not shut their eyes to the physical fact, that increasing produce converted into increased

rents constituted a fresh creation of material riches. They could only feel bewildered when they were told that in the case of such an increase, though there might be a creation of value, there could not be a creation of wealth. They must be aware that the distribution of their revenue was the direct source of the maintenance of the greater part of the non-agricultural classes of the population amidst which they lived; they could not hear without astonishment that the increase of their revenue was a misfortune to those classes. Finally, observing that in ryot monarchies the fleets and armies of the state were wholly maintained from the rents of the sovereign proprietor, and that in serf and metayer countries rents always contributed more or less to similar purposes; they would listen with amazement to the doctrine that the increase of the territorial revenues of a state added in no case anything to its public strength, or to its ability to maintain its military establishments.

It is difficult to imagine that among a circle full of such recollections our lecturer would make converts. His audience would be apt to believe, that the philosopher they were listening to must have fallen from some other planet; that the scene of his experience must have differed widely from the scenes of theirs, and that it was quite impossible the various propositions he was endeavouring to impress upon them could have been derived from a review of the facts with which they were daily familiar.

In truth, it is not easy to read any of the productions of this school of writers without seeing that their system as to rent is derived exclusively

from an examination of the class of farmers' rents. And this class (however interesting to us as Englishmen) has already been stated not to extend itself over one-hundredth part of the cultivated surface of the earth. We shall presently, in examining that particular division of rents, have occasion to show that the writers we have been quoting, and their followers, have been not less hasty and erroneous in deducing principles from the narrow class of facts before their minds, than they have been rash in attempting to apply those principles to the explanation of the phenomena connected with rent over that vast portion of the surface of the globe to which their facts are obviously and utterly inapplicable.

We leave now then those primitive tenures which decide the lot of that large portion of the human race which produces its own food with its own hands from the soil, and turn to trace the revenues of the landed proprietors when another class of agriculturists have taken possession of the task of cultivation on terms different in themselves, and affected in their variations by different causes.

CHAPTER VII.

SECTION I.

FARMERS' RENTS. INTRODUCTION.

THE rents we are about to examine offer at first sight, it must be confessed, a less attractive field of investigation than those which we have left. We have no longer to consider rents as mainly determining, by their forms and their results, the destinies of nations. Those now before us can only exist when the most important relations of the different classes of society have ceased to originate in the ownership and occupation of the soil. When a race of capitalists have made their appearance to take charge of the varied industry of a population, and advance from their own funds the wages of its labour, property in land, and the forms of tenancy it may give birth to, no longer influence, in the first degree, either the springs of government or the constituent elements of society. The composition of the community becomes more complicated; other interests and other sources of power mingle their forces to determine the character and condition of a people, and affect the detail of all their multiplied connections. Even in this state of things, however, that cannot be other than an important attempt,

which seeks to discover the manner in which the revenues of the landed class swell and enlarge themselves with the progress of the community, so as to preserve some proportion with the growing wealth of the body of the people.

But the examination of the various causes which affect the progress of rents at this more advanced period of a people's existence is *not* merely interesting in itself. In the present peculiar state of public opinion on these subjects, such an examination can hardly fail to throw a useful light on other divisions of the subject of the "distribution of the national wealth." It will disincumber, for instance, of many false facts and erroneous opinions our future examination of the course of profits and wages in the more advanced stages of society. It will tend to remove a common, though strange and painful, belief, as to some necessary connection between the progress of the mass of rents and a gradual decrease in the national power of providing food for increasing numbers. It will (incidentally) help to explain the mutations which take place in the relative numbers and influence of the agricultural and non-agricultural classes. These and similar results, which will present themselves in the course of the inquiry on which we are about to enter, will in a degree compensate, it must be hoped, for the rather dry and abstract nature of some of the calculations and reasonings which must be employed.

ORIGIN OF FARMERS' RENTS.

That system of cultivation by peasants which we have been examining, and the various relations between the landlords and the husbandmen to which

it gives birth, have been succeeded on particular spots of the globe, slowly and partially, by a different mode of managing agriculture, and the effect of this change on rents we have now to trace.

After a certain progress in civilization and wealth, the wages of the labouring class consist no longer of a revenue which they themselves extract from the earth: food accumulates in the hands of capitalists (or persons using their accumulated stock to make a profit from it) in sufficient quantities to enable them to advance the labourer his maintenance during the progress of his various tasks; they receive the produce of those tasks when completed, and the great essential step has then been taken which confers on a class of men, distinct from both landlords and labourers, the management of the national industry.

This change usually begins with the non-agricultural classes. It is the artizans and the handicraftsmen who first range themselves under the management of capitalists, and to this point most nations which have any pretensions to civilization have advanced. The case is different with the cultivators. Among some of the most polished people of the globe, and over the greater part of its surface, the agricultural labourers are themselves the managers of agriculture: their wages, as we have seen, never subsist in any other character than that of a revenue of their own, and they exert and direct their labour at their own discretion.

There are, however, districts, of very small comparative extent, in which both the agricultural and other labourers are fed and employed by capitalists. These capitalists receive, of course, the produce of

the labour they maintain, and are responsible to the owner of the soil for its stipulated rent.

One of the immediate consequences of this change is the power of moving at pleasure the labour and capital employed in agriculture to other occupations. While the tenant was himself a labouring peasant, forced, in the absence of other funds for his maintenance, to extract it himself from the soil, he was chained to that soil by necessity; and the little stock he might possess, since it was not sufficient to procure him a maintenance, unless used for the single purpose of cultivation, was virtually chained to the soil with its master. But when the employers of the labourers hold in their hands an accumulated fund equal to their support, this dependence on the soil is broken; and unless as much can be gained by employing the working class on the land as from their exertions in various other employments, which in such a state of society abound, the business of cultivation will be abandoned.

Rent, in such a case, necessarily consists merely of *surplus profits;* that is, of all that can be gained by employing a certain quantity of capital and labour upon the land more than could be gained by it in any other occupation.

SEVERANCE OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RENT AND WAGES.

Rents thus constituted cease at once to decide the amount of wages. While obliged to extract his own food from the earth, the quantity of produce which the labourer retained, the amount, that is, of his real wages, depended, we have seen, mainly on the contract made with the proprietor.

When the engagement of the labourer is with a capitalist, this dependence on the landlord is dissolved, and the amount of his wages is determined by other causes. These we shall hereafter trace; but the termination of the influence of rents on wages is an era in the progress of both too marked to be passed in silence. It is this circumstance which mainly distinguishes the agricultural labourers of England from those of the rest of the world; for, if we except Holland and the Netherlands, England is the only country in which the system of rents we are about to examine prevails exclusively, or even principally.

SECTION II.

DIFFERENT MODES IN WHICH FARMERS' RENTS MAY INCREASE.

WHEN rents consist of surplus profits, there are three causes from which the rent of a particular spot of ground may increase:—First, an increase of the produce from the accumulation of larger quantities of capital in its cultivation; secondly, the more efficient application of capital already employed; thirdly (the capital and produce remaining the same), the diminution of the share of the producing classes in that produce, and a corresponding increase of the share of the landlord. These causes may combine in different proportions in the augmentation of the rents of a country cultivated by capitalists, but when the distinct power and mode of operation of each are once understood, their joint action will be easily calculated.

ON THE PROGRESS AND EFFECTS OF A RISE OF RENTS FROM AN INCREASE OF PRODUCE, CAUSED BY THE USE OF MORE CAPITAL IN CULTIVATION.

In thinly-peopled and rude countries the quantity of labour and capital employed in the cultivation of the soil is usually small when compared with the extent of ground occupied. Wide natural pastures, on which a few cattle pick up a precarious living; ploughed lands worked to exhaustion, and then carelessly rested; rude implements, scanty buildings, deficient fencing and draining; these circumstances all mark the agriculture of Poland or Hungary, and very many other countries, now, as they did that of England in other days. As the numbers and skill of the people increase, the modes of cultivation and the face of the country change: the districts devoted to forests or rough pasturage shrink; the ground is either converted into rich meadows, or ploughed up and made, by a judicious rotation of crops, to combine with and strengthen the general system of the farmer. The portion of the old cultivated lands once devoted to leys and fallows is carefully attended to, becomes less in extent, and has its productiveness increased by being made to bear green crops while resting from corn. While this change is in progress, the cattle maintained for draft or slaughter multiply rapidly; better and more numerous implements, drains, fences, and buildings make their appearance: all, and perhaps more than all, the labour and capital which once loosely occupied 500 acres are now concentrated for the more complete tillage of 100.

We have to examine what must be the effects of

this progressive increase of capital on the surplus profits or rents realized on each portion of the soil.

Corn may be selling either at a monopoly price —that is, at a price which more than pays the costs and profits of those who grow it under the least favourable circumstances; or at such a price as will only repay their common profits. Let us first consider it as selling at a monopoly price. Then, abstracting from all difference of fertility in the soils cultivated, the rent will consist of that portion of the price of the produce which exceeds the cost of production and the ordinary rate of profit on that cost. Let 10 per cent. be the ordinary rate of profit. If the corn produced on any spot of land by 100*l.* sold for 115*l.*, the rent would be 5*l.* If in the progress of improvement the capital employed on the same land were doubled, and the produce doubled, then 200*l.* would yield 230*l.*, and 220*l.* being capital and profits, the surplus, or 10*l.*, would be rent, and the rent will be doubled. If corn, then, is at a monopoly price, increased produce obtained by increased capital (prices remaining the same) may increase the rents in proportion to the increased capital laid out.

Such a case as this, though very unusual, may occur, and therefore must not be omitted. In small communities corn may be constantly at a monopoly price. It is so probably in the Isle of Jersey, where there is always a pressing demand for raw produce, which, in war, kept up rents to 14*l.* per English acre, and, in peace, to 6*l.* or 7*l.* In larger countries too, though possessing much uncultivated soil, corn may, for a long period of time, be at a monopoly

price, provided the increase of population keeps steadily ahead of the increase of tillage.

It must be confessed, however, that a continuous monopoly price of corn is a circumstance which, though not impossible, is very unusual in countries of considerable extent and great variety of soil. In such countries, if the produce of the soils in cultivation sells for more than will realize the usual rate of profit on the capital employed, other lands are cultivated, or more capital laid out on the old lands, till the cultivator finds he can barely get the ordinary profit on his outlay. Then, of course, tillage will stop; and in such countries, therefore, corn is usually sold at a price not more than sufficient to replace the capital employed under the least favourable circumstances, and the ordinary rate of profit on it; and the rent paid on the better soils is then measured by the excess of their produce over that of the poorest soil cultivated by similar capitals. If *A* be a soil which produces to a quantity of capital (*n*) 10 quarters, and pays the ordinary profits on stock; then *B*, if to the same capital (*n*) it yields 12 quarters, will have the price of 2 quarters as surplus profits, and will pay it as rent. Let us suppose a country, then, possessing gradations of soil, increasing in fertility from *A* to *Z*, of which *A* returns to 100*l*. 110*l*., and the others, progressively to *Z*, more than 110*l*. This will represent the real position of the soils cultivated in such extensive countries. In the progress of numbers, of wealth, and knowledge, let us suppose a rude and unskilful mode of cultivation gradually giving place to a better, and additional capital and labour accumulating for the more complete culture

of every class of soil, and then let us observe what would be the necessary effects upon rents (or surplus profits) of this general accumulation of capital in the cultivation of soils of *unequal goodness*.

Let *A* have been formerly cultivated with 100*l*. yielding annually 110*l*., 10*l*. being the ordinary profits on stock: and *B* with 100*l*. yielding 115*l*.: and *C* with 100*l*. yielding 120*l*.: and so on to *Z*. As all above 110*l*. on each would be *surplus profits*, or rent, the rent of *B* would be 5*l*., and that of *C* 10*l*., &c. &c. In some indefinite time let each of these qualities of soil be cultivated with a capital of 200*l*., and their relative fertility remaining as before, let their produce be proportionally increased, *A* will produce 220*l*., *B* 230*l*., *C* 240*l*. All above 220*l*. on each will now be surplus profits, or rent. The rent of *B*, therefore, will have become 10*l*., that of *C* 20*l*. That is, the rent of each will have doubled. It is in this manner that the increasing amount of capital employed on the land of an improving country necessarily elevates rents (or the surplus profits) on all the better soils; and this, quite independently of alterations either in the relative fertility of the soils cultivated, or in the amount of produce obtained by the application of given quantities of capital to the inferior soils.

It may be suggested, perhaps, that though we admit the additional capital employed on the worst soil to yield the same profit as that with which it was originally cultivated (a circumstance of which we shall presently examine the probability), still it is not probable that the better lands will yield a larger produce to the additional capital used exactly proportioned to the superiority of their

original fertility. This may be so, and a rise of rents will still take place, but it will be different in amount.

They yielded to the first 100*l.* laid out as capital, *A* 110*l.*, *B* 115*l.*, *C* 120*l.* Let them yield to the second, *A* 110*l.*, *B* 113*l.*, *C* 118*l.* All above 110*l.* of the additional produce will be rent, *B* will then pay 3*l.* additional rent, *C* 8*l.* The relative fertility of the different soils will be changed. The superiority of the better soils will have become less, if considered relatively to the whole mass of capital now employed on each; but still rents will rise generally: not so much, however, it will be observed, as if the relative fertility of the various soils, after the additional outlay on all, remained precisely the same. It is probable that, in *most* instances, the actual rise will accord with the first calculation; and that the several additions will be proportioned to the original goodness of the soils. If *B* and *C* had a certain superiority over *A* when cultivated in rough pastures, corn crops, and fallows, then when the pasture and fallows of each have, by the application of more labour and capital, been covered with pulse, roots, or artificial grasses, it is probable that the superior productiveness of each will continue to be in about the same proportion. All, however, that is necessary to effect a rise of rents over the surface of a country possessing soils of unequal goodness is this: that the better soils should yield to the additional capital employed upon them in the progress of cultivation something more than the soils confessedly inferior to them; for then while means can be found of employing fresh capital on any soil between the

extremes *A* and *Z*, at the ordinary rate of profit, rents will rise on all the soils superior to that particular soil.

Once more then, the general accumulation of the capital employed in cultivation, while it augments the produce of all gradations of soils somewhat in proportion to their original goodness, must of itself raise rents; without reference to any progressive diminution in the return to the labour and capital employed, and, indeed, quite independently of any other cause whatever. We know that a great increase in the amount of capital employed in agriculture is observable in the progress of all improving countries, as it has taken place in our own. This cause, therefore, must necessarily have a very considerable share in producing the rise of rents, which ordinarily takes place in all countries increasing in riches and population.

This might reasonably be expected: a general increase of the produce of the land, following the application of additional capital and labour to its more perfect cultivation, seems a very natural and obvious cause of a rise of rents.

It has, however, been very positively denied that rents can ever be thus increased; even in the strongest case we have put, that of an undiminished return to additional capital, and an unaltered proportion in the produce of the different soils.

It has been stated, indeed, that such an undiminished return to the additional capital bestowed upon the old land is *impossible* from the laws of nature; and that, if possible, it would effectually keep down rents: that all improvements in agriculture must check their progress, and so be pre-

judicial to the interests of the landlords: and that *nothing* can raise rents but some cause which shall alter the relative fertility of the lands in cultivation. These are the well known opinions of Mr. Ricardo. That gentleman having adopted, as the basis of a very complicated and ingenious system of the distribution of wealth, the single fact of a progressive and invariable diminution to the returns of agricultural labour, decided that this was the cause, and the sole cause, of every general rise of rents which could take place in the progress of nations. It became necessary then for him to show that every other supposed source of increasing rents was imaginary, and among them the one we have been stating, namely, a generally increased produce from the employment of greater quantities of capital in cultivation. Mr. Ricardo accordingly first declares: "That with every increased portion "of capital employed upon the land, there must be "a diminished rate of production." *

This proved, it would of course be impossible that the produce should increase, as we have supposed it to increase, in the same proportion as the capital laid out. But he further declares, that if it could so increase, no rise of rents would follow: he says, "If capital could be indefinitely employed "upon the old land without a diminished return, "there could be no rise of rent." † "Improve- "ments in agriculture, which are common to all "lands, and do not much disturb the relative pro- "portions which before existed between them, can- "not raise rent, because *nothing* can raise rent but "a demand for new land of an inferior quality, or

* Ricardo, 3rd Edit. p. 93. † Ibid. 2nd Edit. p. 55.

"some cause that shall occasion an alteration in "the relative fertility of the land already under "cultivation." "Rent *invariably* proceeds from "the employment of an additional quantity of la- "bour, with a proportionally less return."*

The opinion that the powers of agricultural capital necessarily decrease as the quantity employed increases, is the one of which, perhaps, it is the most important to see the unsoundness: if no additional produce could ever be obtained from the soil without a diminished return to the capital and labour employed, such a law of production would materially influence, no doubt, though in different directions, the fortunes of all classes of society. And if there be no such law, those who have set out with assuming its existence and unceasing action and influence must necessarily have been led into very serious mistakes as to the real causes of that gradual increase of the revenues of the landed proprietors which is usually seen to keep pace with the progress of the art of cultivation.

Mr. Ricardo's views of the necessary decrease in the return to every successive portion of the capital and labour bestowed on the same land are put very distinctly and forcibly by Mr. Mill, whose work, in many of its parts, is a condensed exposition of Mr. Ricardo's opinions.

"A piece of land," Mr. Mill says, in the commencement of his section on rent,† "may be capable "of yielding annually 10 quarters of corn, or twice "10, or 3 times 10. It yields, however, the first 10 "with a certain quantity of labour, the second 10

* Ricardo, 2nd Edit. pp. 518, 519.

† Mill's Elements, 3rd Edit. p. 29.

" not without a greater, the third 10 with a greater " still, and so on; every additional 10 requiring to " its production a greater cost than the 10 which " preceded it. *This is well known to be the law,* " *according to which, by a greater expenditure of* " *capital, a greater produce is obtained from the* " *same portion of land.*"

The law thus unhesitatingly described by Mr. Mill, and as unhesitatingly reasoned upon by Mr. Ricardo and all his followers, as the sole basis of their theory of rent, is one the existence of which it requires, at least, strong facts to prove. If every successive addition to the produce of the soil requires additional cost to obtain it, then improved cultivation and increased crops are really only steps in the declension of the powers of agriculture.

The average corn produce of England at one time did not exceed 12 bushels per acre; it is now about double. Are we to believe that there is a law of nature which makes it inevitable that the cost of getting 24 bushels from one acre is really more than the cost of getting the same quantity from two?

Very obvious considerations point, surely, to an opposite conclusion. The more contracted space in which the operations of the husbandry which produces the 24 bushels are now carried on must give some advantages, and save some expense; the fencing, draining, seed, harvest-work, and even tillage to some extent, must surely be less when confined to an acre than when spread over two. The ancient agriculturists were certainly of this opinion, as I believe the moderns are. " Nec " dubium," says Columella, " quin minus reddat

"laxus ager non recte cultus quam angustus "*eximie.*" *

That there is a certain point beyond which human labour cannot be employed upon a limited spot of ground without a diminished return to its exertions must be admitted at once. But in the progress of those improvements in the art of cultivation by which its most profitable amount of produce is approached, it may be very possible that every successive portion of the capital and labour concentrated on the land may be more economically and efficiently applied than the last.

Such a law would be at least as probable *a priori* as that which supposes that heavier crops and less productive cultivation are inseparable.

If indeed we were to confine our views to some very minute spot of ground, to a square yard for instance, we might for an instant be misled into acquiescing in the plausibility, at least, of this unpleasant version of the laws of nature. When such a spot had been weeded, and dug, and drained, and manured, as well as our present knowledge made possible, it might seem that more labour bestowed upon it must be more feebly rewarded.

Even as to such a limited spot we might possibly be mistaken; but when we include in our view larger districts, such as are usually cultivated under the direction of one person, the case becomes altogether different, because we must then take into calculation the increased power gained by increased skill in the combination and succession of different crops, and in the modes of consuming them, and making them re-act on the fertility of the farms.

* Columella, Lib. i. c. 3.

It has already been stated that, in the course which agriculture has ordinarily followed from rudeness towards perfection, men have begun by devoting a considerable portion of the ground to pasture, while another has been kept ploughed for grain crops, and rested by occasional fallows, or leys, as the exhausted fields were once called in England, when abandoned to their natural produce for a time, though destined to be ploughed up again.

Let us suppose 1000 acres to have been thus treated; that the demand for human food increases, and that it becomes necessary, by more laborious cultivation, to force the powers of the soil.

The measures this has ordinarily led to have been the breaking up the whole, or a portion, of the pasture land, covering the fallows and leys with roots, artificial grasses, and various green crops: feeding an increased number of cattle with the produce of ploughed ground, producing thus more animal manure, keeping the powers of the earth in more constant and vigorous action, and obtaining thus from every part of the farm a more abundant produce.

While these changes are in progress, much more capital and labour must be bestowed upon the cultivation of 1000 acres. Now, how does the fundamental proposition in the theory of rent, promulgated by Messrs. Ricardo, Mill, and Macculloch, apply to the state of things here described?

As the national agriculture thus becomes in the progress of ages more complete and scientific, may not the increased labour and capital used be requited at least as amply as the smaller quantity before

employed under a more ignorant or indolent system. Must every additional 10 bushels of corn *necessarily* be obtained by a larger comparative outlay? Is there really a law of nature which makes this result inevitable? Surely it is neither impossible nor improbable that the earth, under an improving system of husbandry, may disclose powers of rewarding as bountifully the skilful and efficient industry bestowed upon her, as she did the languid and ignorant operations of a less laborious cultivation. There is an indefinite point, no doubt, beyond which agricultural production cannot be forced without a loss; but we must not, therefore, conclude, that man, with increasing knowledge and means, cannot advance from his rudest essays towards this indefinite point without sustaining at each step a loss of productive power, and that he who extracts 40 bushels of wheat from an acre of ground is necessarily worse paid than he who extracts 30; and he who extracts 30 worse than he who extracts 10. The stature of man is limited: there is a point beyond which we know that it would be idle to expect that a human being should increase in height, without decreasing in strength and energy. If we were to argue, thence, that every inch added to a young person's stature in his progress to maturity must be followed by increasing debility, we should argue very ill: but not worse surely than those who, having observed that in the culture of the earth there is a point beyond which fresh labour bestowed must produce feebler results, lay it down as a law of nature, that *no* additional labour can at any time be bestowed upon the earth, without a return less in proportion than that yielded to the labour before applied.

We may reject, therefore, as fanciful the doctrine of Mr. Ricardo and his school, when they would teach us that "with every increased portion of "capital employed upon the land there will be a "decreased rate of production." And we may proceed to consider those positions in which they maintain that, even supposing them wrong in this, and admitting that capital may continue to accumulate with undiminished power on the lands cultivated, still no augmentation of rents could possibly proceed from such a cause.

These opinions are embodied in the following passages:—"If capital could be indefinitely em-"ployed without a diminished return on the old "land, there could be no rise of rent, *for* rent *in-"variably* proceeds from the employment of an ad-"ditional quantity of labour, with a proportionally "less return."*

The truth of the last of these two propositions depends evidently upon that of the first, of which we shall presently see the value. Mr. Ricardo afterwards states that "Improvements in agriculture, "and in the division of labour, are common to all "land; they increase the absolute quantity of raw "produce obtained from each, but do not much dis-"turb the relative proportions which before existed "between them." And thence he argues that such improvements will not raise rents, because "No-"thing can raise rent but a demand for new land "of an inferior quality, or some cause which shall "occasion an alteration in the relative fertility of "the land already under cultivation."† To try the soundness of these positions, let us take a case

* Ricardo, 2nd Edit. p. 55. † Ibid. 2nd Edit. pp. 518, 519.

where all the circumstances of which they affect to state the effects concur, that is, — Where more capital is employed upon the land without a diminished return, and where this additional capital, increasing the absolute quantity of raw produce obtained from each gradation of soil, does not disturb the proportions which before existed between their produce. Let *A* represent a class of land which returns only the ordinary profits of stock at 10 per cent., and pays no rent. Let *B*, *C*, and *D* represent other portions of better land, also cultivated with a capital of 100*l.*, and let their produce be as follows:

A	*B*	*C*	*D*
110*l.*	115*l.*	120*l.*	130*l.*

All above 110*l.* in each will be *surplus profits*, or rent, of which rent *B* will pay 5*l.*, *C* 10*l.*, and *D* 20*l.* Next, let the capital employed on each be doubled, without a diminished return; and without disturbing the proportion between the produce of each, or altering their relative fertility, their produce will be as follows:

A	*B*	*C*	*D*
220*l.*	230*l.*	240*l.*	260*l.*

All above 220*l.* in each will be *surplus profit*, or rent, of which *B* will pay 10*l.*, *C* 20*l.*, and *D* 40*l.*

That is, the rent of each will be doubled.

And it is clear, that with every additional portion of capital, laid out with similar effect, rents will increase proportionably, that is, will double, when capital is doubled; treble, when it is trebled; quadruple, when it is quadrupled; and so on indefinitely, as long as capital can be employed upon the old land without a diminished return, and *without altering the relative fertility of the soils cultivated.*

It is sufficiently evident that, abstracting from all other causes of increase, rents do, and must rise in this manner, in all improving countries, as more and more capital is invested in agriculture. We have seen, however, that it is not essential to the rise that the proportion between the fertility of the soils should be exactly stationary.*

From his general train of reasoning one would be tempted to believe that Mr. Ricardo, in denying that the accumulation of capital *could* ever raise rents without some decrease in its productive powers, had wholly overlooked the necessarily unequal effects of additional capital on soils of unequal fertility: and had assumed in his own mind that the effect produced on the worst soils by all the additional capital employed on agriculture would equal the effect it produced on the best. On the present occasion, however, he committed no such oversight; he himself has added the supposition that their produce should be *proportionally* increased, and his denial of the necessary effects of this unequal increase on rents is therefore the more unaccountable. Another assertion we may observe is, that *nothing* can raise rents but a demand for new land of an inferior quality, or some cause which shall occasion an alteration in the *relative fertility* of the land already cultivated. This opinion is certainly not less erroneous than that which decides on the entire inefficiency of an indefinite accumulation of capital in raising rents, but it is more easily accounted for. Mr. Ricardo, overlooking altogether the peasant tenantry, which occupy ninety-nine hundredths of the globe, had persuaded

* See p. 194.

himself that the existence of a gradation of soils of different fertility was the only cause why rents ever existed at all. It was not unnatural, therefore, that he should conclude that an alteration in their relative fertility was the sole cause of every variation of rents: but even admitting for a moment the correctness of these premises, this conclusion would be fallacious. If we suppose the existence of a gradation of soils to be (what it most certainly is not) the sole cause of the payment of rents, it would still be untrue that "nothing can raise rents "but some cause which shall occasion an alteration "in the relative fertility of the lands cultivated" If we take it for granted with Mr. Ricardo that a difference in the natural fertility of soils is the sole origin of rent, still it is the absolute difference of their products which must always determine the *amount* of the rents paid at any given time, and this difference, and consequently the amount of rents, may be increased indefinitely, while the proportion between the several products of all the soils cultivated to equal quantities of capital, that is, while their relative fertility remains unaltered.

If abstract numbers, bearing a certain proportion to each other, are multiplied by the same number, we know that though the proportion borne by the products to each other will be the same as those of the original numbers, yet the difference between the *amounts* of the several products will increase at each step of the process. If 10, 15, 20, be multiplied by 2 or 4, and become 20, 30, 40, or 40, 60, 80, their relative proportions will not be disturbed: 80 and 60 bear the same proportion to 40 as 20 and 15 do to 10; but the differences between the amount

of their products will have increased at each operation, and from being 5 and 10 become 10 and 20, and then 20 and 40.

So if soils have a relative fertility, which is indicated by their producing to a capital of 100*l.*, respectively 110*l.*, 115*l.*, and 130*l.*, and then the capital employed be doubled, and the produce doubled, their produce will become 220*l.*, 230*l.*, and 260*l.*; and the difference between the amount of their products, or their rents, would be doubled, though their relative fertility remained precisely what it was. Although, therefore, the difference between the relative fertility of soils were the sole cause of rents, it would not follow, that *nothing* could raise rents but some cause which altered the relative fertility of the lands cultivated, since any cause would raise rents which increased the amount of produce of all, while it left their relative fertility untouched; and just such a cause would be that indefinite increase of capital on the old soils, without a diminished return, which Mr. Ricardo so stoutly declares would make it impossible that the revenue of the landed proprietors could ever increase at all.*

Upon pushing this very simple arithmetical calculation a little farther, it will be seen yet more clearly, that Mr. Ricardo was utterly mistaken in supposing, even on his own showing, that an increased difference in the relative fertility of soils was essential to a rise of rents, since rents may clearly rise, even while the difference between the relative fertility of the soils is diminishing; provided the absolute *quantity* of produce in each class

* See p. 191.

is increasing. If 100*l.* be employed on classes *A*, *B*, and *C*, with a produce of 110*l.*, 115*l.*, and 120*l.*, and subsequently 200*l.*, with returns of 200*l.*, 228*l.*, and 235*l.*, the relative differences of the products will have diminished, and the soils will have approximated in fertility; still the difference of the *amounts* of their products will be increased from 5*l.* and 10*l.* to 8*l.* and 15*l.*, and rents will have risen accordingly.* Improvements, therefore, which tend to approximate the degrees of fertility of the cultivated soils may very well raise rents, and that without the co-operation of any other cause.

This process goes on often in practice. The turnip and sheep husbandry, and the fresh capital employed to carry it on, produced a greater alteration in the fertility of the poor soils than in that of the better; still it increased the absolute produce of each, and therefore it raised rents, while it diminished the differences in the fertility of the soils cultivated.

We have attempted to show, that increasing produce from all the qualities of soil in a country, produced by the application of more capital and labour, will necessarily raise rents in an extensive country farmed by capitalists, from the unequal returns to that capital and labour on lands of unequal goodness:—that rents will thus be raised without its being necessary to suppose any alteration in the relative fertility of the soils cultivated, any resort to inferior soils, or any diminution in the produce obtained by agricultural labour on the old soils: and that there is no foundation whatever for

* For a similar calculation, see p. 194. I have let both stand; it is important that they should be understood.

the opinion that, in every stage of such a process, every portion of additional produce successively got from the same lands must necessarily be obtained by a less advantageous expenditure of labour and capital.

Mr. Ricardo, however, is not only of opinion, as we have seen, that increased produce so obtained could never raise rents, but he asserts that it would actually lower them, at least for a time; that is, till the only cause which he contends can ever possibly raise rents comes into play, and additional capital is laid out with a *diminished return*, either upon fresh lands, or upon some portion of the old land. The way in which he defends this rather startling opinion, that increasing crops will be the cause of decreasing rents, is this: he assumes, that if the produce of the land be increased while the population is standing still, and the demand is stationary, some of the land will be thrown out of employment; and the difference between the fertility of the lands actually cultivated will be diminished; a circumstance which in Mr. Ricardo's system is invariably stated, as we have seen, to lead to a decrease of rents.* "If," he says, "a "million of quarters of corn be necessary for the "support of a given population, and it be raised "on land of the qualities of 1, 2, 3, and if an im- "provement be afterwards discovered by which it "can be raised on No. 1 and 2, without employing "No. 3, it is evident that the immediate effect "must be a fall of rent: for No. 2, instead of No. 3, "will then be cultivated without paying any rent: "and the rent of No. 1, instead of being the differ-

* Passages in Note A.

"ence between the produce of No. 3 and No. 1, "will be the difference only between No. 2 and "No. 1. With *the same population, and no more,* "there can be no demand for any additional quan- "tity of corn; the capital and labour employed on "No. 3 will be devoted to the production of other "commodities desirable to the community, and can "have no effect in raising rent, unless the raw "material from which they are made cannot be "obtained without employing capital less advan- "tageously on the land, in which case No. 3 must "again be cultivated." This passage contains the substance of the reasoning on which Mr. Ricardo founds his frequently repeated assertion, that agricultural improvements are always detrimental to the landlords.

Now what would happen while produce was for some time *slowly* and steadily increasing, while population and demand *continued the same, and no more,* we need not trouble ourselves to inquire. It is a case which it will be admitted on all hands is never likely to occur. Neither is this the case put by Mr. Ricardo; he supposes a sudden spread of improvement, by which, as by the stroke of a magic wand, two-thirds of the land of a country are made to produce as much as the whole did immediately before, while the population continues the same, and no more, in which case he supposes the cultivation of one-third of the land would be unnecessary, and cease, and that rents would fall over the whole country.

It is only necessary to remember the slowly progressive manner in which agricultural improvements are practically discovered, completed, and

spread, to perceive how very visionary this supposition of Mr. Ricardo's really is. If two-thirds of the lands of England should ever produce as much as the whole does now (an event extremely probable), we may be quite sure that it will be by no sudden and magical stride that the improvement will establish itself: that the means of effecting it will be discovered in small portions at a time, perhaps at considerable intervals, and will be adopted into general practice tardily, and we may almost predict, reluctantly and suspiciously. † In the mean time, population, and the demand for raw produce, will not have been standing still. In the process by which increased supplies of food are produced for an increasing population, we observe no such wide dislocations between the supply and demand, no such sudden starts and jerks as Mr. Ricardo is driven to suppose, in order to prove that all improvements in agriculture are unfavourable to the interests of the landlords. As the mass of the people slowly increase, we see the gradual pressure of demand stimulating the agriculturists to improvements, which, by an imperceptible progression of the supply, keep the people fed. While these processes are going on, every increase of produce occasioned by the general application to the old soils of more capital, acting upon them with unequal effect, according to the differences of their original fertility, raises rents; and the interests of

* The practice of ploughing light lands with two horses and one man, and the alternate and convertible husbandry, the great improvements of modern times, have been fully known for more than half a century. If they spread themselves no faster than they have done yet, another half century will elapse before they are adopted on all the lands fitted for them.

the landlords are at no moment opposed to improvements, which, while they increase the mass of raw produce, are as favourable to the augmentation of the revenues of the owners of the soil, as they are essential to the well-being of the people.

It may seem hardly necessary to state, that increased rents, brought about in the manner we have now been describing, constitute a portion of fresh wealth created by the industry of the country, and are an unquestionable and satisfactory evidence of the general increase of its resources. It so happens, however, that the same train of reasoning which has led Mr. Ricardo and his school to deny that rents can ever rise except from one cause (namely, the laying out capital upon some portion of land with a less return, and the consequent diminution of the share of the productive classes in all the rest) has led them to maintain, as one of the consequences of this doctrine, that a rise of rent is in all cases a mere transfer of wealth already existing, never a creation of it; that it adds nothing to the resources of a country; that it does not enable it to maintain fleets and armies; that it is a mere transfer of value advantageous only to the landlord, and proportionably injurious to the consumer. Supposing Mr. Ricardo's opinion as to the one exclusive cause of every increase of rents to be correct, then this doctrine must also be correct.* If the soils *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*, produce, *A*

* Ricardo, 2nd edit. pp. 499, 500, 501. "One of these errors (he is speaking of some supposed errors of Mr. Malthus,) "lies in "supposing rent to be a clear gain and a new creation of riches." "Rent then is a creation of value, but not a creation of wealth; it "adds nothing to the resources of a country: it does not enable it

110*l.*, *B* 115*l.*, *C* 120*l.*, *D* 130*l.*; then the share of the producing classes in each being 110*l.*, *A* will pay no rent; and the rents of *B*, *C*, and *D* will be 5*l.*, 10*l.*, and 20*l.* respectively. If only one mode of raising the amount of rents paid by these soils existed, namely, the reduction of the share of the producing classes from 110*l.* to some other sum, say 108*l.*, and the transfer of the difference to the landlords, then the produce being still, for *A* 110*l.*, *B* 115*l.*, *C* 120*l.*, *D* 130*l.*, but the share of the producing classes being reduced to 108*l.* in each, rents would rise to the extent of 8*l.* on the whole. *A*, which before paid no rent, would pay 2*l.*, *B* 7*l.*, *C* 12*l.*, *D* 22*l.* But though rents had risen, the resources of the country would remain precisely what they were. There would have been a partial transfer of wealth, and no alteration in its amount; that transfer would have been advantageous certainly to the landlords, and proportionably injurious to the producing classes; and from the rise in the relative value of raw produce, which, for reasons we need not state now, would accompany the change, the transfer would, to some extent, be injurious to consumers of every class. In this case we have supposed the produce, in consonance with Mr. Ricardo's views, to be stationary; * this is one mode unques-

" to maintain fleets and armies," &c. &c. The reader will have observed already how utterly fallacious and inapplicable these reasonings and opinions are, if we turn to peasant rents, that is, to the large body of the rents actually paid. I trust they will, in the text, be made to appear equally fallacious, when taken as exclusively applicable to the surplus profits realized on the land, that is, to farmers' rents.

* Ricardo, 3rd edit., p. 485. We should have, he says, precisely the same quantity, and no more, of commodities, and the same millions of quarters of corn as before (that is, before the rise of rents).

tionably in which rents may rise to a limited extent; but it is only one, certainly the least common, and by much the least efficient, cause of the increase of farmers' rents: and in laying down general principles on the subject of rent, we can hardly avoid being involved in error by confining ourselves to such an imperfect view of the various sources of its increase, and arguing on an assumption so contrary to obvious facts and every-day experience as this, that while rents are rising, the amount of the national produce is always stationary.

The effects on national wealth of a rise of rents from increased production obtained by the employment of additional capital are of a widely different complexion from those exclusively contemplated by Mr. Ricardo. Let us again suppose *A*, *B*, *C*, *D* to produce respectively 110*l.*, 115*l.*, 120*l.*, and 130*l.*, in a country in which the art of agriculture is backward and imperfect. As skill and wealth increase, let its cultivation become more and more complete, and the capital employed on these soils be doubled; and let them yield (prices remaining the same), *A* 220*l.*, *B* 230*l.*, *C* 240*l.*, *D* 260*l.*: *A* will still pay no rent, but there will have been a rise of rents on the other soils, amounting in the whole to 35*l.*: *B* will pay 10*l.*, *C* 20*l.*, *D* 40*l.*; and these new rents will be a clear addition to the national resources founded on the creation of fresh wealth; no class will be the poorer, nothing will have happened which is injurious to any one; there will have been no transfer of wealth; the relative value of raw produce will (for anything involved in this change) have remained perfectly stationary: and in proportion to this addition to its former resources, will

the country abound more in the "necessaries, conveniences, and enjoyments of society," and be better able "to maintain fleets and armies," or make any other financial effort, than it was. The increased rent, however, will form but a part, and not the most important part, of the augmented wealth and additional resources, which the same multiplication of capital that created the rent will produce and place in other hands than those of the landlords. In the case we have put, it will be observed, that while rents have doubled, agricultural capital, wages, and profits, have doubled too. The land of the community produces twice what it did, and its territorial resources have doubled, although its frontier has not been extended; and while this process is continued and repeated, which, in the progress of a skilful and wealthy people, it may be more than once, such a people will continue to multiply in numbers, in riches, and in political strength, compared with neighbouring nations, among whom a ruder and more inefficient mode of culture may continue to prevail. Increased rents, therefore, originating in the accumulation of capital on the land, and in increased production, are not only themselves a clear addition to the resources of a country, but necessarily indicate a yet greater addition in the hands of the producing classes; an addition which is substantially equivalent to the progressive enlargement of the territory itself.

There is one sense in which the proposition, that rent is no addition to the wealth and resources of a country, is a truth, though a very insignificant truth: when it is merely meant that the produce of the land and labour of a country being deter-

mined, the appropriation of a part of it as rent makes the nation, collectively, no richer than it was before: this certainly is a truth, or rather a puerile truism. The produce of the land and labour of a country being once determined, the amount of its collective wealth cannot of course be affected by the subsequent appropriation of it; whether it be devoted wholly to wages, to profits, or even taxes, the nation collectively is as rich and no richer than it was. But when it is asserted, as Mr. Ricardo obviously means to assert, that in the progress of society increasing rents merely indicate a transfer of a part of the wealth already existing, and never form any real addition to the resources of a nation, the proposition is an obvious fallacy, founded on his own peculiarly imperfect view of the sources in which successive additions to the rents of a country originate.

DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF CAPITAL EMPLOYED IN DIFFERENT SHAPES.

So far we have traced the effects on rents of the accumulation of capital generally: that is, without distinguishing between the effects of the different shapes in which it may be applied to the land during the progress of its increase: and so far as the necessary effect of such an accumulation on rents was alone in question, this general view was sufficient.

But to observe more distinctly the probable progress of the increase of capital employed in agriculture, and the ultimate limit to it; and to trace its effects on the interests of the community, on the relative numbers and weight of the classes which compose it, and on the nature and direction of

their industry, we must carefully distinguish between the effects of increasing capital when it is applied to the support of *additional labour*, and when it is applied as *auxiliary* to the industry of the labourers already employed, without any increase in their number.

I am aware that if we follow Mr. Ricardo, and some later writers, the distinction here made is fanciful. According to them, this auxiliary capital is the result of labour, and, tracing it sufficiently far back, of labour alone. Its employment, therefore, may be considered as the employment *of the labour which was used to produce it:* and whether a man works for ten days in producing a plough to be employed upon the soil, or works ten days upon the soil itself, he does virtually the same thing: in either case ten days' labour has been employed in cultivation. There are some points of view, perhaps, in which this forced identification of the results of labour with labour itself may not be inadmissible, and may even be found convenient for the purposes of calculation. Mr. Ricardo, and the writers who have followed him, universally speak of the labour which a commodity has cost as the sole foundation and measure of its value relatively to all other commodities. A quantity of corn produced by a month's labour of one man, and a plough produced by a month's labour of another man, would, according to them, be of precisely the same value. Hence all commodities must be estimated as so much accumulated labour. "Capital, or what is the same thing, labour," is an expression of Mr. Ricardo's which flows naturally enough from their theory of the origin and measure of value. This theory it is not necessary for our present pur-

pose to examine. I beg, however, in passing, to be numbered among those who believe it defective, and who think that in comparing the exchangeable value of different commodities, other circumstances must be taken into consideration besides the quantity of labour bestowed directly or indirectly upon each. But whether such a theory of value be sound or unsound, for the purposes of our present investigation, it will be necessary to think and speak of labour, and of the results of labour, as two different things. It will hardly be denied, that the using an implement or manure to produce an effect in agriculture, or using directly on the land the labour which the implement or manure may have cost, are substantially distinct and different operations; that they may lead to different results, and each be practicable or profitable only under different circumstances. Now it is some of the effects of such differences that I am about to point out, because I think the knowledge of them will lay open important views of the present condition and possible progress of nations, and of the causes of those changes which take place gradually in the relative numbers and influence of the different bodies of men of which they are composed.

The first difference which we will remark, between the application of capital to agriculture in the support of additional *labourers*, and in the shape of implements, manures, drains, or anything which is the result of past labour as *auxiliary* to the efforts of the labourers actually employed, is this, that in the first case the quantity of human power, compared with the capital employed, remains unaltered;—that in the second case, it is invariably increased. If a capital is used in employing three

men on the soil, and then that capital is doubled, and six are employed, the power employed in cultivation is doubled, but it is not more than doubled; we have no reason for assuming that the labour of the three men last employed will be more efficient than that of the three men first employed. But if, instead of employing the second capital in employing three fresh labourers, means are found of applying it in some of the shapes of auxiliary capital to increase the power of the three labourers already employed, we may then safely take it for granted that the efficiency of the human labour employed directly and indirectly in agriculture has been increased, and that the three men assisted by this auxiliary capital will have powers which six men employing all their power directly to the soil would not possess. To perceive this distinctly, it seems to be only necessary to call to mind what must be the constant motive to employ human labour in framing machinery or implements, or in obtaining auxiliary capital of any kind, in preference to employing that labour directly to obtain the end for which the auxiliary capital is to be used; and what are the usual steps by which the agricultural and manufacturing efforts of civilized nations gain efficiency, or travel from the rudeness and feebleness of the industrious efforts of the savage to the power and comparative perfection of the arts of civilized man.

Man, in his attempts to obtain or fashion to his wants the material objects of his desires, differs from the lower animals principally in this, that his intellect enables him to contrive the means of using the results of his past labour to push the efficiency

of his actual exertions beyond the limits of his mere animal powers. While living on the game of the forest, the hunter devotes a portion of his time to forming his bow and arrows. If the weapons, when made, enabled him to secure no more game than he could have acquired by his unassisted exertions in the time spent in making them, we may be sure the acquisition of them would not continue to tempt him. The husbandman, after scratching the ground for a time with the crooked branch of a tree, devised at last an artificially constructed iron plough: but if the effects on the soil of this plough, when used, were no greater than those which the labour would have produced which was spent in constructing the plough, had that labour been applied directly to the land, then we may be sure that the plough would not have been made. It is so with all the helps contrived by man to assist his labour, from the feeblest and simplest to the most complicated and powerful. If the labour employed in constructing a steam-engine could be applied with the same effect as the engine itself in the various arts and callings of life, we may be sure that steam-engines would never have become common. Whenever, therefore, we see a nation's stock of wealth accumulating in the shape of auxiliary capital: when, instead of using their capital to support fresh labourers in any art, they prefer expending an equal amount of capital in some shape in which it is assistant to the labour already employed in that art, then we may conclude with perfect certainty, that the efficiency of human industry has increased relatively to the amount of capital employed.

In agriculture, the effects of auxiliary capital in strengthening human power are less obvious perhaps, than in manufactures; but certainly not less important. If we observe the quantity of implements, of live and dead stock, of fences, drains and buildings, to be found on the surface of 1000 acres of land in a highly cultivated country, and compare them with the wild and ill-occupied districts of rude nations, we shall see that even in agriculture the efforts made by human intellect to use the results of past labour in strengthening the actual power of the husbandman to develope the resources of the earth have been very considerable. The different extent to which different nations have achieved this forms one of the most important distinctions between them. As man, in his rudest state, and when chiefly employed in satisfying his bare physical wants, is distinguished from the brute creation by his capacity to use the hoarded results of his past exertions to augment his command over the material world; so when we view him in a more advanced state, and attempt to weigh and estimate the causes of the very distinct productive powers of different communities, perhaps equally enlightened, we shall find the different degrees of such power attained by each to be determined, and almost measured, by the different extent to which they have carried this original prerogative of the human race. The necessaries and luxuries of life are supplied, in all countries remarkable for their civilization, by the assistance of a certain quantity of auxiliary capital. But in the amount of that capital possessed and used by each there is a wide difference. In this respect, England stands far a-head of the whole civilized

world, and not less remarkably in her agriculture than in other departments of her industry. It appears from various returns made at different times to the Board of Agriculture, that the whole capital agriculturally employed in England is to that applied to the support of labourers as 5 to 1; that is, there are four times as much auxiliary capital used as there is of capital applied to the maintenance of the labour used directly in tillage. In France, the auxiliary capital used does not amount (as appears from Count Chaptal's book,) to more than twice that applied to maintain rustic labour. In other European countries, the quantity is, I suspect, very much less.

Bearing in mind, then, that at every step in the accumulation of auxiliary capital in cultivation a difference is created in the power of human labour, which does not occur when capital increases only in the shape of additional maintenance for fresh workmen on the soil itself; we may proceed to the second difference between the effects of the employment of auxiliary capital, and of capital applied directly to the support of additional labour, which is this: that when a given quantity of additional capital is applied in the shape of the results of past labour, to assist the labourers actually employed, a less annual return will suffice to make the employment of such capital profitable, and, therefore, permanently practicable, than if the same quantity of fresh capital were expended in the support of additional labourers.

Let us suppose 100*l.* employed upon the soil in the maintenance of three men, producing their own wages, and 10 per cent. profit on them, or 110*l.*

Let the capital employed upon this soil be doubled. And first let the fresh capital support three additional labourers. In that case, the increased produce must consist of the full amount of their wages, and of the ordinary rate of profit on them. It must consist, therefore, of the whole 100*l.*, and the profit on it; or of 110*l.* Next let the same additional capital of 100*l.* be applied in the shape of implements, manures, or any results of past labour, while the number of actual labourers remains the same. And let this auxiliary capital last on the average five years: the annual return to repay the capitalist must now consist of 10*l.* his profit, and of 20*l.* the annual wear and tear of his capital: or 30*l.* will be the annual return necessary to make the continuous employment of the second 100*l.* profitable, instead of 110*l.*, the amount necessary when direct labour was employed by it.

It will be obvious, therefore, that the accumulation of auxiliary capital in cultivation will be practicable when the employment of the same amount of capital in the support of additional labour has ceased to be so: and that the accumulation of such capital in cultivation may go on for an indefinite period:—that is, it may go on as long as human contrivance can use it to urge on the progress of human power in adding to the fertility of the soil, or, what is the same thing, to the efficiency of the labourers employed upon it:—provided only that the additional produce obtained at each step of the process is sufficient to pay the ordinary rate of profit on the fresh auxiliary capital so employed, together with the wear and tear of that capital.

Step by step, however, as the mass of such capital increases, the ingenuity of man must be at work to devise fresh modes of using it. To employ additional labour to increase the produce of the land, all that is necessary is to have the means of maintaining it. To employ more of the results of past labour in assisting the actual tillers of the earth requires constant contrivance and increasing skill.

With the increase of the mass of auxiliary capital employed in agriculture, rents will rise from the unequal effects of that capital on soils of unequal goodness. But the rise of rents from the employment of any given quantity of auxiliary capital will be less than that which would take place from the employment of an equal amount of capital in the maintenance of additional labour. The additional annual produce, we have seen, will be less, and the difference between the amount of the produce of equal capitals on soils of different gradations of fertility (on which difference rents depend) will be of course large when the produce is large, and less when it is smaller. For instance, let *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D* produce as follows:

A	*B*	*C*	*D*
110*l.*	115*l.*	120*l.*	130*l.*

The differences, surplus profits, or rents on *B*, *C*, and *D* will be 5 + 10 + 20, or together 35*l.* Let an additional 100*l.*, employed in the maintenance of additional labour, raise their produce to

A	*B*	*C*	*D*
220*l.*	230*l.*	240*l.*	260*l.*

Rents will be doubled. The addition to them will amount to another 35*l.* But let the additional

capital of 100*l.* be applied in the results of past labour auxiliary to the labour already employed; and let 30*l.* be sufficient to pay the profits of that capital, and replace its annual wear and tear on *A*. If *B*, *C*, and *D* yield a produce to the new capital fully proportioned to their original superiority over *A*, still their produce will not exceed (suppose)

$$A\ 140,\ B\ (115 + 32) = 147,\ C\ (120 + 34) = 154,$$
$$D\ (130 + 36) = 166.$$

The joint rents of the three will now be 47*l.* instead of 35*l.*: but instead of rents being doubled, and, as in the last instance, the addition amounting to 35*l.*, it will amount only to 12*l.*; although, in the mean time, the amount of profits realized by the farmers will have doubled, as in the former case. The progress of rents, therefore, though steady and constant, will be more slow and bear a less proportion to the increased capital employed, and the advance of the incomes of the capitalists, when the additions to the agricultural capital of the country are made in the shape of auxiliary capital, than when those additions are made in the shape of capital employed in the support of additional labour—an apparent disadvantage to the landlords, which is amply compensated to them by the possibility of employing progressively increasing masses of such auxiliary capital to obtain fresh produce, when the maintaining additional labour on the soil for that purpose would be unprofitable and impracticable. We are to bear in mind, then, that the progress of auxiliary capital both increases the command of man over the powers of the soil relatively to the amount of labour directly or indirectly employed upon it, and

diminishes the annual return necessary to make the progressive employment of given quantities of fresh capital profitable;—that it presents, in its accumulation, a source of addition to the mass of rents less copious, but more durable, and longer in arriving at its ultimate limits, than that derived from the direct employment of more labour.

EFFECTS OF THE ACCUMULATION OF AUXILIARY CAPITAL IN AGRICULTURE ON THE RELATIVE NUMBERS AND INFLUENCE OF THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF THE COMMUNITY.

The accumulation in larger and larger masses of the results of past labour, not to maintain the labouring part of the actual population, but to augment the efficiency of their industry, is a process which exercises a decisive influence, not only on the comparative productive power of different nations, but on the various elements of their social and political composition. And in this point of view there are two prominent effects of this mode of increasing the efficiency of the cultivation which must be noticed:—First, the great increase of the relative numbers of the non-agricultural classes; secondly, the great increase of the revenues and influence (and ordinarily of the numbers) of the *intermediate* classes, or the classes existing between the proprietors and labourers. These changes in the relative numbers of the different parts of the community exercise a considerable influence in moulding the fortune and character of nations. The effects of such changes we shall have to trace in another part of our work: it is our object now to show the manner in which the changes themselves are produced.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF AUXILIARY CAPITAL AUGMENTS THE RELATIVE NUMBERS OF THE NON-AGRICULTURAL CLASSES.

When additional produce is obtained by the use of a proportional quantity of additional labour alone, the relative numbers of the agricultural and non-agricultural classes remain unaltered. Let us suppose a capital of one million of money maintaining one million of agricultural labourers; the profits on the million, at 10 per cent., will be 100,000*l.*, and we may assume the rents paid to be as much more. The numbers of the non-agricultural population will depend on the quantity of raw produce which the labourers, from their revenue of one million—the capitalists and landlords, from their revenues of 100,000*l.* each, can spare to exchange for manufactured articles and non-productive labour.* Let that number be 250,000 souls, or one-fourth of the agriculturists. Let us suppose the agricultural capital employed in such a country doubled, and the agricultural labour doubled; that, instead of one million of labourers, two millions are employed; and that the produce, profits, and rents are all doubled too. The habits of the people remaining the same, the quantity of raw produce applied to the maintenance of non-agricultural labour will be doubled also; the non-agriculturists will become 500,000, and their relative number, compared with the increased number of non-agriculturists, will be precisely what it was. Their influence, and that of the produce of their industry, on the habits of the mass of the people—the rela-

* Meaning labour not productive of wealth, as we have defined wealth, that is, material wealth.

tive weight of their employers in the community—will also be precisely what it was, and no more, though the population of the country will have doubled, or nearly doubled.

Let us next suppose the agricultural capital in such a country to be doubled, but the additions to be used not as food to maintain more labourers on the soil, but in some shape auxiliary to the labourers already employed; and let us take the average duration of such auxiliary capital at five years, then profits will have increased from 100,000*l.* to 200,000*l.* The increase of rents may be taken at 50,000*l.*, and the sum necessary to replace the annual wear and tear of a capital of one million, lasting five years, will be 200,000*l.* Here will be a gross additional sum of 350,000*l.* produced originally in the shape of agricultural produce, and wholly applicable to the maintenance of non-agricultural labour; the numbers of the non-agricultural labourers will increase, while those of the agriculturists remain stationary; and this increase may go on swelling and repeating itself, till the non-agriculturists equal or exceed the agriculturists.

This has taken place in England, where the auxiliary capital employed in cultivation is greater than in any other part of the world, and where the non-agricultural population is actually to the agricultural as 2 to 1. In all other extensive countries the agriculturists form the majority: in France they comprise two-thirds of the population; in most other countries much more.

The increase of auxiliary capital is certainly not the only circumstance which affects the proportionate numbers of the two great classes of cultivators

and non-cultivators. Any cause which increases the efficiency of the actual cultivators may do so, but the increase of auxiliary capital is the only cause which, in the ordinary progress of civilized nations, we are sure *must* exercise a progressive influence in this respect.

THE INCREASE OF AUXILIARY CAPITAL INCREASES THE REVENUE OF THE INTERMEDIATE CLASSES.

The next point in which the effects of the employment of auxiliary capital, and of capital consumed in the direct maintenance of labour, differ, is this—that, with the relative increase of auxiliary capital, a great increase ordinarily takes place in the relative revenues of the middling, or, to use a more comprehensive phrase, of the *intermediate* classes. This effect is not peculiar to the increase of auxiliary capital in cultivation, but follows its accumulation in all the branches of human industry. We must enlarge on this elsewhere; but our view of the effects which may be expected to accompany a rise of rents, caused by the general accumulation of capital on the land, would be incomplete without adverting to it. If we suppose any capital (100*l.* for instance) employed upon the soil, wholly in paying the wages of labour, and yielding 10 per cent. profit, the revenue of the farmer will evidently be one-tenth that of the labourers. If the capital be doubled or quadrupled, and the number of labourers be doubled or quadrupled too, then the revenue of the farmers will continue to bear the same proportion to that of the labourers. But if, the number of labourers remaining the same, the amount of capital is doubled, profits at the

same rate become 20*l.*, or one-fifth the revenue of the labourers. If the capital be quadrupled, profits become 40*l.*, or two-fifths of the revenue of the labourers: if capital be increased to 500*l.*, profits would become 50*l.*, or half the revenue of the labourers. And the wealth, the influence, and probably, to some extent, the numbers of the capitalists in the community would be proportionably increased.

This point, at least, the accumulation of auxiliary capital in cultivation has reached in England. The whole capital employed is to that advanced in wages at least as 5 : 1. The auxiliary capital, therefore, is equal to at least four times the capital used in the maintenance of labour; and the income of the capitalists employed in agriculture equal to at least half the wages paid to agricultural labourers.

I have supposed, in the calculations hitherto made, that the amount of labour employed in cultivation has been stationary, while the amount of auxiliary capital has been accumulating. This is little likely ever to be true in practice. A great increase of capital, of whatever description, used in any art, usually makes the employment of some additional direct labour necessary. This circumstance, however, will not prevent the steady progress of the *relative* increase of the auxiliary capital.

The two last-noticed results of the increase of auxiliary capital employed in agriculture, namely, the relative increase of the numbers of the non-agricultural classes, and the relative increase of the revenues and numbers of the intermediate classes, are both changes of considerable importance in the progress of society. Supposing two nations to have

made in other respects nearly an equal progress in arts and manufactures, the abundance or scantiness with which each will be supplied with the decencies and artificial comforts of life will depend entirely on the comparative size of that portion of each community of which the industry is directed to occupations distinct from agriculture; and in every nation, too, the amount of the fund which forms the revenue of the intermediate classes, or of the classes which, in various gradations, separate the higher from the lower orders, is a circumstance of great moment to the political and social character of the people.

While the revenue of the capitalists equals only one-tenth that of the labourers, they form no prominent portion of the community, and, indeed, must usually be labourers or peasants themselves. But a mass of profits equal to, or exceeding one-half the wages of labour (which mass exists in England), naturally converts the class receiving it into a numerous and varied body. Their influence in a community, in which they are the direct employers of almost all the labourers, becomes very considerable; and what is, in some respects, of more importance, such a rich and numerous body of capitalists (as, descending from the higher ranks, they approach the body of the labourers by various gradations, till they almost mingle with them) form a species of moral conductors by which the habits and feelings of the upper and middling classes are communicated downwards, and act more or less powerfully upon those of the very lowest ranks of the community.

The relative prevalence of artificial comforts con-

sequent on the existence of a large industrious non-agricultural population; ranks of society approaching and blending in successive orders, so that the higher are linked with the lower, and a channel of communication formed through which their moral influence may, to a certain extent, constantly pass to their inferiors;—these are circumstances, the practical effects of which we shall have to trace in another portion of our work, when we are examining the ordinary progress of the numbers of nations. They will be found to have an important bearing on our subject, while we remark various circumstances successively unfolding themselves in the progress of civilization, which tend to moderate the disposition of a people to exert their full physical powers of increasing their aggregate numbers, and help to subject the animal passions of man to the partial control of motives, aims, and habits peculiar to him as a rational being.

We will conclude here our examination of the first source enumerated of a rise of farmers' rents, namely, the progressive accumulation and unequal effects of capital on all gradations of soils.

We have found that such an accumulation ordinarily takes place in the progress of population and wealth:

That the rise of rents which proceeds from this cause is wholly independent of the cultivation of inferior soils, and of the expenditure of capital on the old soils with a diminished return; and that it might go on indefinitely, though neither of these circumstances ever occurred:

That the additional capital may be employed in

maintaining additional agricultural labourers, or in various shapes in which it is only *auxiliary* to the labourers already employed:

That when fresh capital is used in agriculture in the latter shape, the power of the human labour applied directly or indirectly to the soil may be assumed to be increasing, while the quantity of additional produce necessary to make the employment of a given quantity of capital profitable is decreasing:

That hence the accumulation of auxiliary capital with increasing effect on the land may go on for an indefinite period after the employment of additional capital, without a diminished return in maintaining more agricultural labour has become impossible:

That with the employment of greater masses of auxiliary capital the relative numbers of the non-agricultural classes will increase, and also the revenue, the influence, and ordinarily the number and variety of the intermediate classes which connect the higher with the lower.

We have seen that the general increase of production which follows such an accumulation of capital on the old soil is a most important and beneficial addition to the territorial resources of the people among whom it takes place:—and that there is *practically* no period of such an increase at which the interests of the landed proprietors are not in strict unison with those of the population.

SECTION III.

ON THE SECOND SOURCE OF THE INCREASE OF FARMERS' RENTS, OR ON THE INCREASING EFFICIENCY OF THE CAPITAL EMPLOYED.

In the progress of agriculture, and after the establishment of farmers' rents, some improvements may be expected to take place in the efficiency of the capital employed in cultivation. Both the skill and power of the cultivating class increase. Their skill, because much thought is sedulously applied to the subject by men freed from the toilsome and absorbing occupations of the mere labourer, and not distracted, like the landlords, by loftier pursuits and more enticing occupations. With the increase of skill the mere manual exertions of the labourer, and the most ordinary and rudest implements and means, become more efficient, because better directed and combined. But as the agriculturists increase in skill they usually increase also in the power which they can apply to effect their purposes. The increase of auxiliary capital in all its shapes (one invariable effect of advancing wealth and knowledge) has a constant tendency, as we have seen, to put such increased power into their hands.

Of increased skill and increased power an increase in the efficiency of the capital employed in cultivation is a necessary consequence, and may show itself by two effects.

1st. Less capital may be necessary to produce a given quantity of produce from a spot of ground.

2nd. The same capital may produce from the same spot of ground a larger produce than it before

yielded. The last of these improvements ordinarily includes the first. When, on any spot of ground, 100*l.* can be so employed as to produce a larger return than the same amount of capital did before, then some smaller quantity of capital will usually obtain the same produce which 100*l.* once did. But the first improvement mentioned does not always include the last; for means are sometimes discovered of getting the same amount of produce cheaper when no means have been hit on of increasing it. In whichever result, however, the increasing efficiency of the capital employed shows itself, rents will rise; and unless the progress of improvement outstrips the progress of population, and the growth of produce exceeds the growth of demand (an event rarely to be expected), this rise of rents, from the increased efficiency of the capital employed, will be permanent; and it will ordinarily coincide, as we shall presently see, with an extension of the agricultural wealth, the population, strength, and resources of the country. If 90*l.* can be made to produce what 100*l.* formerly produced from the same spot of ground, say 110*l.*, the profits realized will have risen from 10 per cent. to somewhat more than 20. Of these profits somewhat more than 10*l.* will be surplus profits or rents. Again, if 100*l.* formerly produced a certain quantity of corn which sold for 110*l.*, and can now be so employed as from the same spot to produce corn which at the same prices would sell for 120*l.*, additional surplus profits will be made on that land, and additional rent be paid for it; provided that the whole improvement is not discovered, completed, and generally adopted so rapidly as to make the now increasing

quantity of corn outstrip the progress of population and demand, for in that case prices might fall and rents remain stationary or recede. It is not necessary again to discuss the probability of this dislocation between the demand and supply. The rise of rents which would follow such an increased efficiency as we have been assuming of the capital employed in agriculture would clearly be quite independent of any spread of tillage to inferior soils. Such a rise of rents might take place, and go on increasing with the increase of population indefinitely, though no inferior gradations of soil were in existence.

There is a clear addition to the national resources when rents rise from the increased efficiency of agricultural capital. But this addition (unlike that which accompanies a rise of rents from the greater accumulation of capital on the soil) is usually confined to or measured by the increased rents themselves. When 100*l.* produces (prices being the same) corn worth 120*l.*, instead of corn worth 110*l.*, the wealth of the nation is increased by ten pounds' worth of corn, and no more. When 90*l.* will produce the same quantity of corn which 100*l.* did produce, the nation is enriched to the same amount in another shape; for 10*l.* may be withdrawn from agriculture without its produce being diminished, and the nation will be enriched by being put in possession of any other commodities which the capital of 10*l.* may be employed to produce. The increase of national wealth will in either case be confined to the amount of 10*l.*, the same sum by which rents rise. Increased rents, therefore, from the increased efficiency of capital, though an addi-

tion to the national wealth and resources, do not indicate so large an addition to those resources as increased rents proceeding from the accumulation of capital in cultivation; for an increase from this last source is accompanied, as we have seen, by a great addition to the means of the producing classes, which must be added to the new rents before we can estimate the whole addition to the nation's resources which such a rise of rents indicates.

So far increased rents from a better use of the capital employed in agriculture may seem to come accompanied by less extensive additions to the national resources than increased rents proceeding from the gradual increase in the amount of the capital employed in cultivation. But there are some results of the increasing efficiency of agricultural capital that remain to be noticed which very much augment the effects on public prosperity of a progressive rise of rents from this source.

It has already been shown that a spread of tillage to inferior soils does not necessarily accompany or follow a rise of rents when the efficiency of the cultivator's capital increases; that such an extension is in no sense either the cause of such a rise or essential to it. But still, in fact, the same increased productiveness of agricultural capital which occasions a rise of rents on the old lands usually makes it possible to extend tillage to lands of inferior natural fertility with as ample a return as that obtained from the old soils before the improvement took place. When the turnip husbandry was first adopted by the Norfolk farmers, it was found to increase the fertility of their lands so much, that

farms which before yielded a very small rent now yielded one considerably larger. But another, and in a national point of view a much more important, result followed. There existed in England large tracts of light sandy soil, supposed to be wholly sterile, on which this new mode of husbandry was practicable, and when the produce of kindred soils of somewhat better staple yielded much more than the ordinary profits of stock, and paid considerable rents, it became possible to cultivate some of the more barren tracts without a loss. They were rapidly reclaimed from the waste, and the agriculture of England has since been gradually spreading itself over large districts of this description, which before yielded little or no human food, and contributed nothing to increase that mass of wages, profits, and rents which compose jointly the resources of the country.

Nor is this the only, though it is the most obvious, manner in which an increased efficiency of agricultural capital widens the agricultural resources of nations at the same time that it is elevating rents. Such an improvement usually leads to the employment of a greater quantity of capital over the whole cultivated surface of the country.

If the capital which before yielded the ordinary rate of profit, say 10 per cent., now yields 120*l.*, and pays a rent of 10*l.*, the farmer will often find that he can employ another portion of capital, say 100*l.*, which though it may not pay so much as his old capital now does, will still pay on some soils barely, perhaps, 110*l.*, the ordinary profits of stock; on others, perhaps, 111*l.*, 112*l.*, and 113*l.*, that is, something more on each than the usual rate of

profit, though not so much as the old capital has been made to yield by the improved efficiency of its application. On these last soils rents will then be rising from two causes—from the increased efficiency of the old capital, and from the unequal effects on soils of different degrees of fertility of the new capital which begins to accumulate on them. When an opportunity offers of thus gradually augmenting the capital which they can profitably employ on the old lands, the farmers of a prosperous country will slowly take advantage of it.

For reasons hereafter to be explained, in countries where capital abounds, the owners of it are always impelled by self-interest to use the various additions which they employ as much as possible in the shape of auxiliary capital, and as little as they can help in the shape of wages of labour. The gradual increase of the relative quantity of auxiliary capital is, therefore, the ordinary effect of the progressive increase of the whole mass of capital employed in agriculture. This is naturally followed, for the reasons we have stated, by a progressive increase of the efficiency of human industry; and in this manner the means are gradually developed of contending successfully with soils of a low degree of native fertility, and of obtaining, without a diminution of agricultural power, the supplies for an increasing population. As the cultivated territory thus widens, large quantities of capital accumulate both upon the old soils and upon the successive additions to the tilled ground, and the resources of a nation to maintain a numerous population are at once multiplied and extended.

Although then the immediate addition to the

national wealth, which is indicated by a rise of rents from the increased efficiency of the capital employed, is limited to the amount of the increased rent itself, yet the spread of tillage to inferior soils, and the increase of capital on the old soils, which usually follow such a rise, produce an additional extension of the resources of a people, which is of very great importance to the welfare and strength of every increasing community.

We have seen that a spread of tillage to inferior soils is by no means essential to the rise of rents, which takes place when agricultural capital becomes more efficient. But the establishment of this fact does not disclose all the errors of those who have thought and taught that "Rent depends "*exclusively* on the extension of tillage; that it is "high where tillage is widely extended over infe- "rior lands, and low where it is confined to the "superior descriptions only." * Whenever a rise of rents takes place from the increased demand for agricultural produce, the spread of tillage to inferior soils presents the practical limit to that rise. It is clear that if, as population increased, all fresh supplies were necessarily extracted from the old soils alone, there would be no assignable limit to the increase of the relative value of raw produce, of the surplus profits made on the land, or of rents. But while additional quantities of produce can be obtained from inferior gradations of soils, the price of raw produce will never exceed the cost of procuring it from the lowest gradation which it is found expedient to cultivate; and if, from the increasing efficiency of agricultural capital, the cost

* Macculloch, p. 282.

of getting produce from that gradation is not greater than it was on the old soils before the improvement, the price of raw produce will not rise at all. The inferior soils, therefore, though their culture is not essential to a rise of rents, present always a boundary to that rise. Their existence is a protection to the interests of the consumers, without interfering with those of the landed proprietors. They prevent corn being sold at a monopoly price, and cut off the increased rents which such a price creates, without interfering with the beneficial increase of the revenues of the landed proprietors, which flows either from the source we are examining, the better *application* of capital, or from that we have before examined, the increased *quantity* of capital employed in the national agriculture.

Improvements, therefore, in the efficiency of the capital employed in cultivation raise rents, by increasing the surplus profits realised on particular spots of land.

They invariably produce this increase of surplus profits, unless they augment the mass of raw produce so rapidly as to outstrip the progress of demand; an event of rare occurrence.

Such improvements in the efficiency of the capital employed do usually occur in the progress of agricultural skill, and of the accumulation of greater masses of auxiliary capital.

A rise of rents from this cause is generally followed by the spread of tillage to inferior soils, without any diminution in the returns to agricultural capital on the worst spots reclaimed.

This spread of tillage must not, however, be

confounded with the causes of the rise of rents on the old soils, with the origin of which rise it is wholly unconnected, while it serves in its consequences to moderate and limit those augmented rents.

SECTION IV.

ON THE THIRD SOURCE OF THE INCREASE OF FARMERS' RENTS, NAMELY, A DECREASE IN THE SHARE OF THE PRODUCING CLASSES, THE PRODUCE REMAINING THE SAME.

A RISE in the relative value of raw produce (the cost of producing other commodities remaining stationary), from whatever cause the rise proceeds, will always be followed by a decrease of the share of the producing classes in the products of the soil, relatively to the labour and capital they employ, and by a corresponding rise in the produce rents of the landlords.

Let 100*l.* be laid out on *A*, a soil paying no rent, and yielding only the ordinary profits of stock; and let the produce be 50 quarters of corn, selling at 2*l.* 4*s.* per quarter, or 110*l.* If the relative value of corn rises, and the price is raised 2*s.* a quarter, the 100*l.* laid out on *A* will produce 115*l.*, of which 5*l.* will be surplus profits. The farmers' profits, at his next contract with his landlord, will be reduced to the level of those of his neighbours. This can only be done by his retaining so much only of the produce of his land as at the advanced prices will pay him 110*l.*; the landlord will take the remainder, or the price of the remainder, and it will become rent. *A*, which before paid no rent, will now pay a rent of 5*l.*, and, in like manner,

upon all the superior soils which before paid rent there will be a rise, from the decrease of the share of the producing classes in their produce, the produce itself remaining stationary.

So far the decrease of the share of the producing classes, and the corresponding rise of rents, have been wholly unconnected with the cultivation, or even the existence, of inferior soils. The rise of raw produce proceeds always, in the first instance, from an increasing demand without a corresponding increase of the supply. If a country had no soil to resort to besides those already cultivated, the demand might keep constantly a-head of the slowly-increasing supply; and the possible increase in the relative value of raw produce, and the consequent rise of rents, would be indefinite.

But when inferior gradations of soil exist, and can be resorted to, the rise in the exchangeable value of raw produce is limited. It will stop when the price of corn is sufficient to replace, with the ordinary rate of profit, the expense of cultivating as much of those inferior soils as will yield the produce necessary to restore the balance between the demand and supply. This state of things is what usually exists in extensive countries possessing soils of various degrees of goodness, and it is that which we shall more particularly examine while tracing the effects of a rise of rents from a decrease of the share of the producing classes in the products of the soil. But we must not, therefore, lose sight of the fact that the rise of rents which takes place from the cause we are now tracing is antecedent to, and independent of, the spread of tillage to inferior soils, and must take

place to a much greater extent than we ever now see it, were there no inferior soils in existence.

THE INCREASE OF PRODUCE RENTS IS MEASURED BY THE DECREASING FERTILITY OF SOILS.

Where, in consequence of an increasing demand for raw produce, cultivation is spreading to inferior soils, if the return from those soils, in spite of the increasing skill and augmented power of the agriculturists, be still less than the return from the old soils before was, the permanent rise of produce rents from this cause will be measured by the difference between the return to a certain quantity of capital and labour from the new soils, and the return to the same quantity of capital and labour from the worst of the old soils.

If on *A*, a quality of soil paying no rent, a certain quantity of labour and capital produces 55 quarters of corn, and on *B*, a soil worse than *A*, the same quantity of labour and capital can produce only 53 quarters, then when the demand for corn, and the rise in its relative value, becomes such that *B* can be cultivated, and pay the ordinary profits of stock, *A* will pay a rent of two quarters of corn: for *B*, which produces 53 quarters, returning the ordinary profits of stock, *A*, which produces 55 quarters, must return the ordinary profits of stock, and also two quarters of corn, which two quarters, or the price of them, will become surplus profits, or rent.

It will be obvious that the rise of rents in this case forms no addition to the resources of a country. The increased rents of the old soils are a mere transfer of a portion of the wealth already existing

from the producing classes to the landlords: the nation, collectively, is neither richer nor poorer than it was; there has only been a change, and by no means a desirable change, in the distribution of wealth which it already possessed. In this respect, as in many others, a rise of rents from this cause contrasts much to its disadvantage with a rise from the two causes of which we first analyzed the operation.

But the apprehensions which have been entertained as to a necessary falling off in the returns to capital and labour generally, which it has been supposed must always follow a diminution in the returns to agricultural industry on the worst soils cultivated, are happily extravagant and groundless. Such a diminution in the power of agricultural industry, though a possible event, takes place in the progress of a wealthy people very rarely. I doubt if it ever takes place at all; and, when it does take place, we must not hastily conclude that, because the quantity of corn remaining in the hands of the producing agricultural classes is diminished, there must therefore be a fall either in profits or wages, or that such producing classes would have the means of consuming either less corn, or less of any other comm dity, than they did before the reduction of their share in the produce of the soil. For these conclusions, which look at first very like truths, are in fact fallacious, as a short examination will show us.

THE DECREASING FERTILITY OF SOILS MAY BE BALANCED BY THE INCREASED EFFICIENCY OF MANUFACTURING LABOUR.

Human industry is not wholly employed in producing raw produce; and its increasing efficiency

in other departments may balance, and more than balance, the decreasing powers of agriculture: may enable the society to spare the additional proportion of men and capital required to produce an undiminished quantity of food for increasing numbers, and that without lessening the mass of wealth enjoyed by any class of men. This will appear more clearly from an example or two to which I solicit the reader's attention, as containing the proof of a fact very important to be understood, in examining the possible progress of human society, after population has become dense, and capital and the arts have made great progress. Let us first take the simplest case which involves the principle we wish to explain, and let us suppose ten shipwrecked mariners cast on some uninhabited shore, and dividing between them the task of providing their common food, clothing, and shelter. During the first year, let the exertions of five men be sufficient to supply their table, and the exertions of the other five their food, raiment, &c. In the next year, food may have become more scarce, and the time of eight of the men may be occupied in procuring it. But in the mean time, the skill of the artizan division may have so improved, that two men may be able to secure to the whole party the same quantity of clothing, shelter, &c. that before engrossed the industry of five. In this case, four-fifths of the labouring hands will be occupied in procuring food, instead of one-half as before. Still the consumption of articles of every description will remain the same throughout the little community. We may put the case yet stronger. If one man became able to supply the clothing, &c., they might

spare nine to go in quest of food, and might actually consume more food, and as much of everything else, as they did while food was more easily procured.

Let us next observe, what effects would be produced by a similar change in the productive powers of different classes of the community, if such change occurred among a people whose social relations were less simple than those of the knot of men we have been figuring to ourselves, and let us suppose a community consisting of 24 men, employed, one-half in producing corn, and one-half in producing cloth. Let corn, for our present purpose, represent all the varieties of raw produce, and cloth all commodities produced by the national industry which are distinct from raw produce.

Let the corn-growers produce 14 quarters of corn, and the cloth-makers 14 pieces of cloth, of each of which let 12 go to wages and two to profits. Then, if each party exchange half their produce with the other division, every labourer in each will have half a quarter of corn, and half a piece of cloth; and their two employers will have a piece of cloth and a quarter of corn each.

Next, let us suppose this labourng population doubled: that there are 48 labourers instead of 24, and that, to produce double the quantity of corn, it has become necessary, from the decreasing fertility of the fresh soils resorted to, to employ in agriculture, not double the number of men formerly employed, but more than double; say three times the number, or 36 men. Then, by the supposition, 36 men produce double the quantity of corn before produced, or 28 quarters. In the mean while, let

the productive powers of the cloth-workers have so increased, that to produce double the former quantity of cloth, the labour of double the number of men is not necessary, but of a less number, say of 12: then by the supposition, 12 men will produce double the former quantity of cloth, or 28 pieces. But as 36 men produce 28 quarters of corn, while 12 men produce 28 pieces of cloth, each quarter of corn will exchange for three pieces of cloth.* Between the 48 men, there will be to be divided 28 quarters of corn, and 28 pieces of cloth, which will give them their old wages of half a quarter of corn, and half a piece of cloth each, and will also leave four quarters of corn and four pieces of cloth as profits. But the capitalist cloth-worker, employing only one-fourth of the men, will take only one-fourth of the profit, or one piece of cloth and one quarter of corn. The corn-grower, employing three-fourths of the men, will take three-fourths of the profit, or three-quarters of corn and three pieces of cloth. As the rate of wages remains precisely what it was, so will the rate of profits: for each employer of 12 men, at the old wages, will still get one piece of cloth and one quarter of corn as the profit on his advances.

If the power of the manufacturer of cloth, instead of doubling, had more than doubled during this process, then it is evident that the producing classes generally might consume not merely as much corn, but more than as much corn as they did

* It would complicate the calculation if we were to take in here any elements of exchangeable value besides the mere labour employed; and to demonstrate the truth we are travelling to, that complicated calculation is not necessary.

before recourse was had to soils of a less fertility; for, instead of employing 36 men, they might have employed a greater number in cultivation, have produced and consumed more corn, yet get the same quantity of cloth which they did before. The agriculturists will receive, in the first instance, from the soil less corn, in proportion to their numbers, than they did before the increase of population and the spread of tillage: but, as by the sacrifice of a smaller portion of that corn they can obtain the same amount of other necessaries which they may need, they will retain as much or more corn for their own consumption as they did when they drew larger returns from the ground. Each manufacturer or mechanic will give in exchange for the corn which he consumes a larger quantity of his own produce than he did before the spread of tillage; but, as he produces more than he did, he will be able to purchase the same amount of corn without consuming less of other necessaries. The effects of the failure in productive power of one branch of the population will be balanced, perhaps more than balanced, by the increased productive power of another branch. Those who produce less will find their commodities rising in exchangeable value; those who produce more will find them falling. These variations in relative value will distribute equally all the advantages and disadvantages of the variations which take place in the productive power of different branches of industry. A falling off in any one branch may still leave the nation collectively, and each particular class of it, as well supplied even with that species of produce as before the decrease, and the only effect of a decrease

in one quarter, and increase in another, will be a difference in the proportionate number of labourers and quantity of capital employed in different occupations.

We have seen, that as the process we have been describing became complete, and corn rose in exchangeable value, a rent would be generated which did not exist before. This increased rent, however, unlike those which we have before been considering, will be obviously no addition to the resources of the country. It will be a mere transfer of wealth already existing from the producing classes to the landlords. The nation, it is true, will be richer relatively to its numbers than it was before the spread of tillage: for the producing classes, we have seen, will have the same quantity of raw produce and other necessaries which they had; and there will be further in the hands of the landlords a certain portion of the produce of the old lands as rent. But this additional wealth will have proceeded, not certainly from the decreasing powers of agriculture, but from the increased efficiency of manufacturing industry, which has enabled the nation to spare, without a loss, the hands necessary to cultivate soils of diminished fertility, and rather more than balanced the effects of the decreased powers of agricultural industry. The nation, collectively, would no doubt have been richer had no rent been generated, if the land last employed in tillage had yielded returns equal to those of the lands before cultivated, and if the advantages of increased manufacturing power had been gained without any diminution in the returns to agricultural industry. When rents are increasing from the two

sources of which we before examined the operation, namely, the accumulation of additional capital in agriculture, and the increased efficiency of capital already employed, then the result is an unmixed advantage. Agriculture is itself adding largely to the resources of the country, and the increasing wealth which flows from the augmented powers of manufacturing industry is balanced by no drawback. It must be distinctly admitted, on the other hand, that a rise of rents from the particular cause we are now examining is no real addition to the resources of a nation. The decreasing efficiency of agricultural capital must always be a disadvantage, but it is consolatory to reflect, that such a decrease, while it checks the *possible* advance of a nation in wealth, is not necessarily followed by any *actual* impoverishment: that neither the rate of wages or rate of profits are determined solely by the returns to the capital employed upon the soil, and that they may remain undiminished, and may even steadily increase while the fertility of the soil is as steadily diminishing. The career of the human race would indeed have been melancholy, had the laws of nature been such, that as the numbers of nations increased additional food must necessarily have been procured by the sacrifice of additional labour; a sacrifice involving in its consequences a fall in the rate of wages or profits, which no increase of intelligence, skill, and power, in the other branches of human industry, could make amends for. But the supposed necessity of the sacrifice of additional labour to procure greater supplies, and the supposed effects of that sacrifice should it take effect, are each of them unfounded suppositions. The facts, happily, are all

imaginary on which the assumption rests of an iron necessity dogging thus the progress of mankind, and depriving them ever of some portion of necessaries and comforts as their numbers expand. Should the produce of agriculture begin to lessen, the increased means and skill of civilized communities, we have seen, may enable them to spare the additional hands necessary to force the flagging powers of the earth, without leaving any class of the community worse supplied with wealth in any of its shapes.

SECTION V.

ON THE FALLACIOUSNESS OF SOME SUPPOSED INDICATIONS OF THE DECREASING EFFICIENCY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR.

WE hope to have shown satisfactorily, first, that there is no ground for supposing that additional supplies of food for an increasing population must necessarily be got at the expense of more labour. And, secondly, should they be got at the expense of more labour, that it by no means follows that the producing classes must necessarily submit to consume less either of food, or of anything else. Still it has been admitted, that at some period in the existence of nations there may be a rise of rents caused by a decrease in the returns to agricultural capital; and the opinions which have lately been prevalent make it important to destroy every temptation to ascribe hastily to this unpopular cause those successive additions to the revenues of the landed body which other causes almost necessarily occasion during the prosperous career of

nations: causes, the continual action of which we have already observed to be in perfect harmony, and indeed closely connected with the progress of a people in wealth, and resources, and agricultural power, and skill. We must entreat, then, the further patience of the reader, while we show that some indications which have been supposed to *prove* in the most unquestionable manner some actual decrease in the powers of agriculture will turn out, on examination, to afford no such proof at all.

The circumstances usually referred to with the most confidence, as indicating a decrease in the productive powers of agriculture, are, first, a fall in the rate of profits; secondly, a rise in the relative value of raw produce, compared with other domestic commodities; thirdly, a rise in the prices of raw produce, compared with the actual prices in neighbouring countries of similar soil and climate, or compared with former prices at home, provided, in the last case, the rise be greater than can be accounted for by any fall which may have taken place in the value of the precious metals.

A FALL OF PROFITS IS NO PROOF OF THE DECREASING EFFICIENCY OF AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY.

A decrease in the share of one of the producing classes, that is, a fall in the rate either of wages or of profits, is never necessarily the result of the diminished productive power of human industry in any of its branches.

If when profits fall from 12 to 10 per cent., wages experience a corresponding rise, there can have been no decrease of productive power. As wages always engross the largest part of the produce, a

moderate and almost insensible change in wages will bring about marked and considerable variations in the rate of profits, quite independently of any alterations in the efficiency of agricultural or other industry. Let us suppose 100*l.* to be employed in paying wages, returning 112*l.*, or a profit of 12 per cent. If wages rise from 100*l.* to 102*l.*, that is, 2 per cent. only, then (the productive power of labour being stationary) profits must fall from 12*l.* on 100*l.* advanced, to 10*l.* on 102*l.* advanced: or from 12 per cent. to something under 10 per cent.: there will have been a rise of one-fiftieth in wages, and a resulting fall of one-sixth in profits. And on the supposition here made, that all the advances of the capitalist are in the shape of wages, it is clear that a rise of 12 per cent. in wages would not merely diminish the profits of the capitalist, but absorb them entirely.

In practice, however, a moderate rise of wages will not affect profits so seriously as in the instance here assumed, because all capital is not employed in paying wages, and the effects of fluctuations in the rate of wages are not confined to the profits on the wages themselves, but are spread over a larger body of profits, and are thus attenuated. If we suppose 500*l.* to be employed in production, and of that sum only 100*l.* to be advanced as the wages of labour; the profits of 500*l.* at 12 per cent. will be 60*l.* If the rate of profits in this case is to be reduced by a rise of wages to 10 per cent., that is, to a sum of 50*l.*, the rise of wages must be more considerable than in the instance before assumed. The sum advanced by the capitalist is 500*l.*: the whole produce is 560*l.* Let wages rise 10 per cent.,

and become 110*l.*; the advance of the capitalist will then be 510*l.*, and, prices being stationary, his profit 50*l.*, which will be 10 per cent. within a small fraction. Supposing, therefore, the whole capital employed to be equal to five times the sum paid in wages (which is, perhaps, nearly the true proportion in England), a rise of 10 per cent. in wages, that is, *an addition of only* 1*s. to every* 10*s. before advanced to the labourer*, will lower profits from 12 per cent. to 10 per cent., and such a moderate rise of wages might produce, in fact, nearly all the difference observable in the rates of profit current in the different states of Europe.*

In these calculations we have supposed the productive power of the national industry stationary. Were it ever really so, the influence on the rate of profit of fluctuations in the amount of wages would strike all practical observers more forcibly than it now does; but, in truth, the productive power of the national industry is rarely, or perhaps never, stationary; and while that power is varying, the results of its changes must often balance to a certain extent, and therefore disguise the influence of alterations in the rate of wages on profits. Thus if we suppose, as before, 100*l.* expended wholly in wages, and paying 12 per cent. profit, the produce will be 112*l.* But if the productive power of industry be so increased that, prices remaining the same, the return becomes 134*l.* 8*s.*, then wages may

* It will be shown hereafter that in a country replete with capital, as England is, it is always highly probable that the rate of wages will be sufficiently a-head of that rate in poorer countries to produce a slight inferiority in the rate of profits in the richer country; though its productive power be the greatest and in a state of rapid increase.

rise to 120*l.*, and profits will not vary at all; they will still be 12 per cent.; while wages have increased one-fifth, and the only change will be an addition to the mass of capital devoted to the advance of wages. While the productive powers of labour are varying, therefore, we may expect that the influence of fluctuations in the amount of wages on the rate of profits may often escape notice. It appears, however, that marked and considerable variations in the rate of profits may be results of changes in the rate of wages alone. It follows, that a fall of profits is no sure indication of diminished productive power in any branch of human industry, and consequently can never be accepted as a proof of the decreasing efficiency of agriculture especially.

These propositions, with respect to the influence of variations in real wages on the rate of profits, appear to me, I confess, almost too obvious to be formally stated, had they not been formally denied, and very extensive consequences founded on the denial. Mr. Ricardo, and others who have followed in his track, have believed that they could trace every possible variation in the rate of profits to a decrease in the productive power of agriculture alone. To establish the truth of this opinion, they were bound to show that no other cause could affect the rate of profits, and of course that variations in the rate of wages could not. Their mode of doing this was sufficiently simple. It consisted in denying (while treating on profits) that any such thing as a permanent change in the rate of real wages could ever take place.

It would at first sight appear that profits depend partly on the amount of the produce of labour,

partly on the division of that produce between the labourers and capitalists; and that their amount, therefore, might vary from a change in either of these particulars. If certain labourers, whose wages amount to 100*l.*, or 100 quarters of corn, produce 112*l.*, or 112 quarters of corn, profits would be 12 per cent.; but they would sink to 10, if wages rose to 102*l.* or quarters, just as certainly as they would if the productive power of the labourers diminished, and, wages remaining stationary, they only produced 110*l.* or quarters.

But if it could be proved that the labourers' share was in truth invariable, that, with the exception of short intervals of time, they must continue to receive 100*l.* or quarters, and neither more nor less, it would follow, of course, that all permanent variations in the rate of profits must proceed from changes in the productive power of industry alone. We have already remarked that a diminution of profits rarely proceeds from a diminution in the productiveness of non-agricultural industry, which may raise the rate of profits, or sustain them when they are falling from other causes, but can seldom occasion their retrogression. Were it once admitted, then, that profits never fall from variations in wages, it would follow that they must usually fall from a decrease of the productiveness of agricultural industry. The theory of the permanent immutability of real wages, or of the constant sameness of the quantity of necessaries consumed by the labourers, on which rests this belief of the exclusive agency of the decreasing powers of agricultural labour in diminishing profits,* hardly

* "We have seen, in treating on wages, that they invariably rise

requires a set discussion to refute it. It is never adhered to by Mr. Ricardo himself, except when treating the particular subject of variations in the rate of profit. At other times he speaks, without hesitation, of permanent alterations in the condition and habits of the labourer, of variations in the rate of natural and real wages. But when attempting to simplify his analysis of the circumstances which influence the rate of profits, and to reject the agency of all but his favourite cause, namely, the return to the capital last employed upon the soil, he goes back to this position, equally inconsistent with facts, and with his own arguments and admissions; and asserts, again and again, that permanent changes in the rate of real wages never take place, and need never, therefore, be taken into account in estimating the causes of the rate of profits.

His defence of this assertion, when it is attempted to be defended, rests on an exaggeration of some facts connected with the subject of population.

Fluctuations in the rate of real wages do, under certain circumstances, and to a certain extent, impel or retard the increase of the numbers of the labouring population, and, by altering their relation to the funds from which they are supported,

"with the rise in the price of raw produce. It may be taken for "granted that, under ordinary circumstances, no permanent rise "takes place in the price of necessaries without occasioning, or "having been preceded by, a rise in wages. Thus we again arrive "at the same conclusion which we have before attempted to esta- "blish, that in all countries and all times profits depend on the "quantity of labour requisite to provide necessaries for the labourers "on that land, or with that capital which yields no rent."—Ricardo, pp. 118, 128.

re-act on the rate of wages. From this undoubted fact many have been misled, partly by haste, and partly by overstrained ingenuity, to draw the wide and very fallacious inference, that every increase or decrease in real wages will produce an expansion or shrinking of the population precisely sufficient to restore, after a time, the relation which existed (before the alteration of wages) between the numbers of labourers and the funds for their support, and thus bring back wages to their former amount.

This opinion of the effects of alterations in wages on the numbers of the population will meet us again in a part of a subject when it will be more our business to examine it. At present, without a more extensive discussion of it, we may appeal to obvious facts and every-day experience. We see very different rates of real wages prevailing in countries with similar climates and soils, and sometimes, as in the case of England and Ireland, under the same government. We observe, in the same countries, alterations taking place from century to century, and from generation to generation, in the food, clothing, lodging, habits, and general mode of maintenance of the people. We have already seen, too,* that a very moderate change in the rate of wages is sufficient, while the productive power of industry remains the same, to produce a very considerable change in the rate of profits: and we will venture, therefore, at present to assume, without further argument, that such a permanent rise in the rate of real wages is neither impossible nor improbable, as is quite sufficient to produce alterations in the rate of profits, equal to the differences of that

* See page 257.

rate in any of the countries of Europe. This will be enough to support the position we are maintaining, that a fall of profits is never an unequivocal proof of a diminution in the efficiency of agriculture, because it may proceed from a different division, between the labourers and their employers, of the produce of the national industry, while the amount of that produce remains unaltered, or is increasing in all its branches.

AN INCREASING RELATIVE VALUE OF RAW PRODUCE IS NO PROOF OF THE DECREASING EFFICIENCY OF AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY.

Among the proofs of a decreasing efficiency in agricultural industry, the increasing relative value of raw produce is usually treated as one of the most decisive; and this, no doubt, would be a conclusive proof, could we suppose the productive power of manufacturing industry (meaning all industry other than agricultural) to be stationary while raw produce was thus rising in relative value. If 12 quarters of corn are observed to exchange for 12 pieces of cloth during one century, and in the next 12 quarters of corn exchange for 24 pieces of cloth, then, if we were sure that no change had taken place in the expense of manufacturing cloth, we might very rationally conclude that the cost of producing corn had doubled. But when we take into account the very great increase which from time to time really takes place in the efficiency of manufacturing industry, the case is altered; and we see that an increase in the relative value of raw produce is what must be expected, although the productive power of agriculture were stationary, or

even to a certain extent increasing. For instance, let two men produce two quarters of corn, and two men two pieces of cloth; and a quarter of corn and a piece of cloth will exchange for each other. Next, the efficiency of agricultural industry increasing, let two men produce three quarters of corn, and the efficiency of manufacturing industry increasing yet more, let two men produce six pieces of cloth; corn will have risen in relative value; a quarter of corn, instead of exchanging for one piece of cloth, will exchange for two. In this case, clearly, we should be mistaken if we assumed the fact of a decrease in the efficiency of industry from that of the rise of the relative value of raw produce.

In the progress of nations an increase of manufacturing power and skill usually occurs greater than that which can be expected in the agriculture of an increasing people. This is an unquestionable and familiar truth. A rise in the relative value of raw produce may therefore be expected in the advance of nations, and this from a cause quite distinct from any positive decrease in the efficiency of agriculture.

AN INCREASING MONEY VALUE OF RAW PRODUCE, COMPARED WITH THE PRICES OF OTHER COUNTRIES, IS NO PROOF OF THE DECREASING EFFICIENCY OF AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY.

There are various causes which may elevate the money value of raw produce; one is undoubtedly the decreasing fertility of the soil which governs prices. If, in two neighbouring countries paying equal wages, the land is such that it requires three men in the worse to produce the effect which two men will produce in the more fertile of the two, the

poorer country will not be able to sell its produce as cheaply as the richer. Still different prices are no certain indication of a difference in fertility: they may proceed from at least three other and distinct causes: first, from a higher rate of wages; secondly, from a higher rate of taxation; thirdly, from a different value of the precious metals.

Whatever effect on prices may be produced by the necessity of employing more men in agriculture will be produced by the necessity of paying higher wages to the men actually employed or of paying higher taxes. When the corn-grower, getting the same quantity of produce, is obliged to pay away an additional quantity, whether the fresh expense is incurred in the shape of wages to additional labourers, or of greater wages to those before employed, or of heavier taxes, must be indifferent to him; and as far as the cost of cultivation is concerned, it amounts to the same thing. And supposing two countries to grow corn at precisely the same expense of labour and capital, an alteration in the rate of wages or the amount of taxation may raise the cost of cultivation in the one beyond that in the other, though the dearer country be stationary, or even (to a limited extent) improving in the efficiency of its agricultural industry.

There is a third cause, also, quite distinct from the decreasing fertility of the soil, which may increase the prices of raw produce in one country while prices in other nations are stationary, and that is a decreasing value of the precious metals peculiar to the dearer country. That this is a cause which has some effect upon the prices of the different countries of the world there can be little

doubt. I wish, however, to be distinctly understood as giving no opinion on the possible extent or the limits of that effect. The eminent writer I am about to quote first on the point thinks it will appear "that far the greater part of the high "price of corn in this country, compared with most "of the states in Europe," is occasioned in this way. "The causes," Mr. Malthus says,* "which "affect the price of corn, and occasion the difference "in this price so observable in different countries, "seem to be two. First, a difference in the value "of the precious metals in different countries under "different circumstances; secondly, a difference in "the quantity of labour and capital necessary to "produce corn. The first cause undoubtedly occa-"sions the greatest portion of that inequality in the "price of corn which is the most striking and pro-"minent, particularly in countries at a considerable "distance from each other. More than three-fourths "of the prodigious difference between the price of "corn in Bengal and England is probably occa-"sioned by the difference in the value of money in "the two countries, and far the greater part of the "high price of corn in this country, compared with "most of the states in Europe, is occasioned in the "same way." In a note to some further observations on the same subject, Mr. Malthus afterwards says,† "This conclusion may appear to contradict "the doctrine of the level of the precious metals. "And so it does, if by level be meant level of value "estimated in the usual way. I consider that doc-"trine, indeed, as quite unsupported by facts. The

* 'Principles of Political Economy,' p. 193.

† Page 198.

" precious metals are always tending to a state of " rest, or such a state of things as to make their " movement unnecessary. But when this state of " rest has been nearly attained, and the exchanges " of all countries are nearly at par, the value of " the precious metals in different countries, esti- " mated in corn and labour, or the mass of commo- " dities, is very far indeed from being the same." Mr. Ricardo has stated similar opinions:—" When " any particular country excels in manufactures, so " as to occasion an influx of money towards it, the " value of money will be lower, and the prices of " corn and labour will be relatively higher in that " country than in any other. This higher value " of money will not be indicated by the exchange. " Bills may continue to be negotiated at par, al- " though the prices of corn and labour should be " 10, 20, or 30 per cent. higher in one country than " another. Under the circumstances supposed, such " a difference of prices is the natural order of things, " and the exchange can only be at par when a suf- " ficient quantity of money is introduced into the " country excelling in manufactures, so as to raise " the price of its corn and labour."* " In the early " states of society, when manufactures have made " little progress, and the produce of all countries " is nearly similar, consisting of the bulky and most " useful commodities, the value of money in different " countries will be chiefly regulated by their dis- " tance from the mines which supply the precious " metals; but as the arts and improvements of so- " ciety advance, and different nations excel in par- " ticular manufactures, although distance will still

* Ricardo, 2nd Edit. p. 163.

"enter into the calculation, the value of the pre-
"cious metals will be chiefly regulated by the supe-
"riority of those manufactures."* "Of two coun-
"tries having precisely the same population, and
"the same quantity of land of equal fertility in
"cultivation, with the same knowledge too of agri-
"culture, the prices of raw produce will be highest
"in that where the greater skill and the better ma-
"chinery is used in the manufacture of exportable
"commodities."†

The admission of the influence of this cause on the price of commodities in different countries is an unlucky, but unavoidable bar, it must be confessed, to anything like accuracy in an analysis of the proportions of the different elements of price in different nations. There are no very obvious means of determining to what extent money prices may be affected by that different level of the precious metals, the existence of which is here laid down by the joint authority of Messrs. Malthus and Ricardo. And the attempt to solve the question can only be successful, I think, when founded on an industrious and difficult comparison of all possible elements of price, distinct from the local value of the precious metals. But if, ceasing to treat this as a general question, we narrow our view to the causes which affect the peculiar value of the precious metals in Great Britain alone, we may conclude, with tolerable certainty, that the low value of those metals must affect prices here more powerfully than in any other European country. In the first place, England is pre-eminent in the art and means of manufacturing those exportable com-

* Ricardo, 2nd Edit. p. 159. † Ibid. p. 157.

modities which, according to Mr. Ricardo, tend to saturate her with gold and silver; and this is not the only peculiarity which tends to lower the value of those metals in England. The perfection of the art of substituting for those metals, and the rapidity of her circulation, serve to magnify the effects of the influx produced by her export trade. Let us suppose England and France to require each 100,000,000 for circulation, and each to possess that sum. If the English found means to substitute paper for 50 of the 100,000,000, then 50,000,000 of bullion would be set free, and would have the same effect in lowering the value of the mass as 50,000,000 of newly imported metal. If, by increasing the rapidity of circulation, 50,000,000 could be made to perform functions which before required 100,000,000, a similar result would follow, and the value of the mass be similarly affected. Now in England, the art of substituting for coin is carried to an extent unknown elsewhere. Independently of the notes of the Bank of England, and of country bankers, private bills to the amount of 100,000,000† are calculated to be constantly circulating as cash. The operations of the London *clearing-house* are familiar to the public, and are alone sufficient to diminish, to a very considerable extent, the quantity of cash required to carry on the money transactions of the empire. The rapidity, too, of the English circulation we know to be unrivalled.

Adding then the effects of her greater progress in the art of substituting credit and paper for coin, and of the greater rapidity of her circulation,

* See article 'Credit,' Supplement to Encyclopædia Britannica.

to the results of the superiority of England in the manufacture of commodities for foreign sale, it will appear that all the causes connected with the value of the precious metals which tend to produce a high money value of commodities are in more powerful action here than in any other European country, and that, *whatever may be the possible effects of those causes* in lowering the value of the precious metals, and on money prices, those effects are likely to be felt more extensively and powerfully in our own country than in any other.

Leaving the individual case of England, however, we return to the general proposition, that abstracting altogether from any difference in the productive powers of agriculture, the money prices of raw produce in different countries may vary from a different value of the precious metals alone.

It has been shown, then, that prices of raw produce, high when compared with those of neighbouring countries of similar soil andclim ate, may proceed from three causes acting separately, or jointly, and all of them quite distinct from the decreasing fertility of the soil, namely, from higher wages, higher taxes, or a low relative value of bullion; the last of which alone a writer of great eminence has declared to be so influential, that it occasions "far the greater part of the high price of "corn in this country compared with most of the "states in Europe."* High money prices, therefore, compared with those of the neighbouring countries of similar soil and climate, cannot be received as any indication of a decreasing power in the agriculture of the dearer country.

* Malthus, 'Principles of Political Economy,' p. 193.

We have already seen that neither a low rate of profits, nor a high value of raw produce, compared with other commodities fabricated at home, are certain indications of the decreasing productive power of agriculture. There is a circumstance which at first sight appears a more sure indication of such a decrease than any of those we have yet examined; an appearance however still fallacious.

When, abstracting from the effects of taxation, an apparent diminution takes place in the revenues of the producing classes considered jointly; when there is a fall in the rate of profits, not compensated by a rise of wages, or a fall of wages not compensated by a rise in the rate of profits, there has been, it may be argued, some decrease in the productive power of labour and capital, and for the moment we will suppose this argument sound. When such decrease occurs, it has lately been assumed as *certain*, that the failure must have been in agriculture, and not in manufactures, because the efficiency of mechanical and manufacturing labour usually increases instead of decreasing in the progress of nations. But this last position is far from being universally true. The majority of the nations of the globe are perhaps, at this moment, improving in manufacturing power, and there is no physical reason why they should not continue to improve. But when we take *political and moral* causes into our view, the history of the world forbids us to conclude that the progress of mankind in the mechanical and manufacturing arts is always necessarily in advance. Egypt, the African shore of the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, and the Morea, can aid mechanical industry with but a feeble part

of the ingenuity or power which both their story and their monuments attest that they once possessed. Capital and science are, in our days, indispensable assistants to the artizan, and the decay of the domestic arts, and the failing efficiency of the industry connected with them, must, therefore, be expected to come in the train of the evils which assail the decrepitude of nations, and gradually impair their resources. England is at this moment the principal theatre of all that power and skill can effect, in the various departments of human industry which are distinct from agriculture; and yet, if days are to come when her freedom, and wealth, and the many elements of her actual power forsake her, it is in these departments of industry that the progress of decay may be expected to exhibit itself the most strikingly. The power of her artizans, and the wonders of her manufactures, will assuredly disappear with the capital and science which now support them. In a nation so circumstanced, the means of the population may become less, and the annual consumption of all classes shrink, though the efficiency of agriculture should remain stationary.

We have been arguing on the admission, that a decrease in the rate either of wages or profits, the other of the two remaining stationary, is a proof of a diminished produce and lessened productive power in *some* of the departments of national industry; and have merely attempted to show that, even with such an admission, an assumption that the decrease necessarily originates in agriculture is inadmissible. Hereafter, we shall have occasion to prove that the admission itself is too large; that a de-

crease in the rate of profit, with stationary wages, does not of itself indicate any diminution of the productive power in the population; that it is even quite consistent with advancing efficiency in the national industry, and may be accompanied by a steady increase of the power of accumulating fresh capital; but the development of this proposition belongs to another part of our subject.

We have attempted then, as we proposed, to establish, first, that there is no necessary decrease in the returns to agricultural labour and capital as cultivation spreads to soils of inferior quality, or extracts a greater produce from the soils already cultivated; and secondly, that several circumstances usually supposed to indicate the existence of such a decrease of agricultural power, namely, a fall of profits, a high relative value of raw produce compared with other commodities, or a high price of raw produce at home, compared with that grown in countries of similar soil and climate, may one and all originate in distinct and different causes. There remains, it appears to me, no method of ascertaining the fertility of the soils governing prices, which are actually cultivated in any country, relatively to the fertility of those cultivated in the same country at earlier periods, or in other countries at the same period, but actual comparison. One branch of such an inquiry might be difficult: it may not be easy to compare the costs of production in one century with those of another century, in the same country. It is easier to compare, at the same period, the cost of producing corn in a dear country with the cost of producing it in neighbouring countries, in which it bears a lower price, and has a lower relative

value. It would not be impracticable, for instance, to take England, and Poland or Germany, and to make them the subjects of such a comparison, selecting from the poorest soils equal districts of considerable size in each; (for all observations on small plots of ground are, for many reasons, fallacious;) it would be necessary to ascertain (abstracting from money prices) the quantity of labour and the quantity of auxiliary capital employed in each country; and their respective produce. The result would show with sufficient accuracy the productive power of agricultural labour and capital in each country. If it should appear that, in the country where money prices and rents are the highest, the labour and capital employed in agriculture really yield more produce than similar quantities employed in countries where the money prices of raw produce are comparatively low, then we must ascribe the high prices of the dearer country either to heavier taxation, to higher rate of wages, or to a lower value of the precious metals, or to the joint influence of all these causes; not to the poverty of the soils brought into cultivation, or to the poor returns to the doses of capital gradually applied to the old soils. And any increase of the revenues of the landed proprietors which may have taken place must (abstracting from changes in the value of money) be traced, not certainly to a decrease which has not occurred in the returns to agricultural industry on the soils governing prices, but to a gradual increase of produce, common to all soils, but greatest in amount on the best; and to successive improvements in the efficiency of agricultural capital.

SECTION VI.

On some Indications of the real Sources of increasing Rents, which are to be obtained in particular Instances, by observing, *First*, the Variations which take place in the *comparative Numbers* of the agricultural and non-agricultural Classes; and, *Secondly*, the Alterations which show themselves in the Landlord's *proportion* of the produce.

It has been stated, that nothing short of a precise enumeration of the wages and capital expended in obtaining similar quantities of produce will enable us to decide, with perfect certainty, upon the comparative* *actual* fertility of the soils which govern prices, either in different countries at the same time, or in the same country at different times. Such a comparison may be often impossible. Yet in observing the growth of the territorial revenues of a country, we shall naturally be desirous to know, in every instance, whether that growth has proceeded "from the employment of an additional quantity of "labour with a proportionally less return," (Mr. Ricardo's sole cause of rents,†) or from the more genial sources of increased produce obtained by increased capital, and improvements in the efficiency of the capital previously employed.

There are two circumstances which may guide us in our inquiries on this point, if not to perfect and

* The comparative *potential* fertility of soils, that is, the fertility each would be found to possess after having been for some time cultivated, with the most and best industry, skill, and means, is something very different from their comparative *actual* fertility; a circumstance which should always be remembered, when the policy of cultivating apparently barren wastes is under consideration.

† "Rent *invariably* proceeds from the employment of an addi-"tional quantity of labour with a proportionally less return," Ricardo, 1st Edit. p. 60.

conclusive certainty, yet to a high and satisfactory degree of probability: and these are, first, the variations which take place in the *relative numbers* of the agricultural and non-agricultural classes; secondly, the alterations which may be traced in the *proportion* of the produce taken by the landlords. Indeed, the evidence furnished by these circumstances ought to be accepted, as we shall see, by the school of Mr. Ricardo as perfect and demonstrative, although their writings forbid us to suppose that this ever occurred to them.

When, during the spread of tillage, "an additional quantity of labour is employed with a proportionally less return," the numbers of the agriculturists must be on the increase, compared with those of the non-agriculturists. A simple calculation will show this. Let 2,000,000 of cultivators produce 4,000,000 of quarters of corn, sufficient to maintain 4,000,000 of people: the number of agriculturists and non-agriculturists in such a community (abstracting from foreign trade in corn) will be just equal. Let the population increase to 8,000,000: if the fertility of the fresh soils now cultivated equal the fertility of the old soils, then 4,000,000 of cultivators will be able to produce food for the 8,000,000 of people, and the relative numbers of agriculturists and non-agriculturists will remain as they were. But if to yield the food of the additional 4,000,000 of people, the fresh ground cultivated requires "an additional quantity of labour with a proportionally less return," then a larger number than 2,000,000 of the increased population must be employed in producing food for themselves and the other 2,000,000. Let that larger

number be 3,000,000, and then 5,000,000 of agriculturists will be employed in producing the food of 8,000,000 of people. The agriculturists constituted one-half of the population before its increase, they will now constitute five-eighths of it. And if the numbers of the community continue to increase, and the ground from which their additional supplies of food are raised continues to absorb "an "additional quantity of labour with a proportion- "ally less return," then the numbers of the cultivators must also continue to increase relatively to the numbers of the non-cultivators.

In the next place, if rents in a country occupied by farmers should ever rise from that cause alone which has been so confidently stated by Mr. Ricardo to be the *sole* possible cause of a rise of rents, namely, "the employment of an additional quan- "tity of labour with a proportionally less return," and a consequent transfer to the landlords of a part of the produce before obtained on the better soils; then the average *proportion* of the gross produce taken by the landlords as rent will necessarily increase. This is almost self-evident, but it may be as well perhaps to give a short calculation. Let *B*, *C*, and *D*, then, be soils cultivated with equal capitals, &c.; let *B* produce 12 quarters of corn, *C* 14, and *D* 16; then, *B* yielding the ordinary profits of stock, *C* will have 2, and *D* 4 quarters of corn as surplus profits or rent. The landlord's proportion of the produce of *C* and *D* taken together will be 6 quarters out of 30, or one-fifth. During the progress of population, let it be necessary to cultivate another soil *A*, yielding to the same quantity of capital which is employed on *B*, *C*, and *D* only

8 quarters of corn. Then, as 8 quarters must now yield the ordinary profits of stock on the capital employed, *B*, which before paid no rent, will have 4 quarters as surplus profits or rent, *C* 6, and *D* 8 quarters: and the landlord will take from the soils paying rents 18 quarters out of 42, or a fraction more than two-fifths of their gross produce, instead of one-fifth, his former proportion. And so progressively, as additional labour and capital are employed in tillage, with a proportionally less return, additional portions of the produce of the old soils will continue to be transferred to the landlords as surplus profits, in order to equalize the profits made by all the cultivators; and a larger proportion of the whole produce will thus, step by step, assume the shape of rent.* In any country, therefore, in which there has been a general rise of rents, proceeding "from the employment of an additional "quantity of labour with a proportionally less re-"turn," and the consequent transmutation of a part of the produce of the old soils into rent, these two results must be observable, first, the industry of a larger proportion of the population must be devoted to agriculture; secondly, the *proportion* of the gross produce paid to the landlords, as rent, must have increased. If these two results are not observable, these rents must have increased from some other cause or causes, and not from "the employment of

* Mr. Ricardo himself was perfectly aware (indeed he could not be otherwise) that this was a necessary conclusion from his doctrine as to the one sole cause of augmented rents. "The same cause," he says, "the difficulty of production, raises the exchangeable value "of raw produce, and raises also the *proportion* of raw produce paid to "the landlord as rent."—Ricardo on Political Economy, 2nd edit. p. 71.

"additional labour in agriculture with a proportionally less return;" and in that case, Mr. Ricardo and his school must have been wrong, when they supposed this last to be the *only possible* cause of increasing rents.

This reasoning is so obvious, that when brought into contact with circumstances as they exist around us, the result must have served to rouse more wary reasoners into an immediate suspicion, or rather conviction, of the unsoundness of their system. The instance of our own country, viewed with the assistance of these principles, is conclusive as to the fact that the cause erroneously assumed by Mr. Ricardo to be the sole source of every rise of rents cannot possibly have been in action during the great elevation of rents which has actually taken place here. On this point the example of England is the more important, because it is there alone we can observe, on a scale large enough to be satisfactory, the progress of farmers' rents, and the connection of that progress with the fortunes of the other classes of society.

THE INCREASE OF RENTS IN ENGLAND HAS PROCEEDED FROM THE INCREASE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

The statistical history of England presents to us, prominently, three facts: first, there has been a spread of tillage, accompanied by a rise in the general rental of the country; secondly, there has been a *diminution of the proportion* of the people employed in agriculture; thirdly, there has been a decrease in the landlord's *proportion* of the produce. No one of these circumstances requires surely any formal proof. That there has been a

great spread of tillage we know. That there has been a considerable increase in the general rental of the country is a fact admitted by persons who hold the most opposite opinions as to the real causes of that increase. That there has been a great augmentation of the *relative* numbers of the non-agricultural classes is a fact almost equally notorious. The returns to the two last population acts prove that this process is still going on. The non-agriculturists in England amount at present to double the agriculturists, a proportion so widely different from that which prevails in other parts of the world, as to constitute perhaps the most striking among many peculiarities in the economical position of the English population. In France, before the Revolution, the cultivators were as 4 to 1 when compared with the rest of the people. The progress of the other classes has, since the Revolution, been extremely rapid: instead of one-fifth, they now constitute one-third of the whole population. France has, with the exception of England, the largest non-agricultural population of any considerable nation on the face of the globe. There is no reason whatever to suppose that the cultivators of England three hundred years ago were less numerous when compared with the rest of the English population, than those of France are now compared with the rest of the French people. The change which has so completely reversed their relative numbers and given so great a superiority to the other classes has probably been long in progress, and although we know it lately to have proceeded with considerable rapidity, those movements of the different branches of the population by which

it has been effected were probably at the commencement slow; but nothing very exact can be ascertained on this point, which is not at all essential to our present purpose.

The gradual diminution of the landlord's proportion of the produce has long been notorious. The following statement is from Adam Smith. After asserting that in more ancient times nearly the whole of the produce belonged to the landlord, he goes on to say, "In the present state of Europe "the share of the landlord seldom exceeds a third, "sometimes not a fourth part of the whole produce "of the land. The rent of land, however, in all "the improved parts of the country, has been "tripled and quadrupled since those ancient times; "and this third or fourth part of the annual pro- "duce is, it seems, three or four times greater than "the whole had been before. *In the progress of "improvement, rent, though it increases in propor- "tion to the extent, diminishes in proportion to the "produce of the land.*" Various returns made to the Board of Agriculture show that the third or fourth part mentioned by Adam Smith as having become in his time the ordinary share of the landlords in the produce is a larger proportion than they now obtain,* a fact to be expected, if his doctrine contained in the sentence just printed in italics be correct.

In England, then, rents have risen, the *proportion*

* Some of these returns may be seen in Mr. Lowe's book, 2nd Edit. p. 155. It will be observed, that the expenses only are there compared with the rent; adding profits on the lowest possible scale, it will be seen that the rent must have ordinarily been about one-fifth of the gross produce. Even this exceeds the usual calculations of some experienced land-valuers.

of hands employed in cultivation has become much less than formerly, and the *proportion* of the gross produce taken by the landlord as rent has diminished. It follows from the preceding principles and calculations, that the general rise of rents which has taken place has not "proceeded from the em- "ployment of an additional quantity of labour with "a proportionally less return," but from some cause or causes essentially distinct from that, and attended by opposite results.

It appears then, as the last result of our analysis, that the increased rents of this country have proceeded from better farming and greater produce. *

There are persons, no doubt, and more perhaps among the ranks of the political economists of the present day than elsewhere, who will disdain conclusions so like those of the uninitiated. Those who have been trained in better schools of reasoning must smile at such a feeling. The inquirer into the secrets of nature expects with reason that the progress of his labours will lead to the continual revelation of fresh wonders: but in ethical and political investigations our general views must, for the most part, be founded on facts and feelings common to the human race, and forcing themselves into very general observation. On these subjects, therefore, without showing any quarter to stubborn prejudice or brute ignorance, we may still very

* To estimate that greater produce fairly, it is always to be recollected that we must not confine our views to the increased corn produce of small spots, although that is remarkable, but must take in the varied produce of considerable tracts; or at least of whole farms.

safely conclude that there are no symptoms of a false and diseased spirit of philosophizing so certain as a feverish thirst for the stimulus of startling novelty; a contempt for obvious truths merely because they are already familiar; and a disposition to thrust aside, unregarded and unnoticed, any conclusions which resemble those to which every-day experience and prompt spontaneous judgments have conducted the bulk of mankind.

SECTION VII.

THE INTERESTS OF THE LANDLORD ARE NOT IN OPPOSITION TO THOSE OF THE OTHER CLASSES.

THERE is great reason to believe that cases very rarely occur in which the rentals of districts cultivated by farmers increase, not because more produce has been obtained from the earth, but because the share of the producing classes has diminished with the increasing difficulties of production. We have just seen that in England, the only considerable country in which farmers' rents are extensively prevalent, there is strong evidence to show that this circumstance has not in any degree influenced the progress of rents. Still it has been admitted, that in an extreme case this would be a possible cause of increased rents; and the belief now widely spread, that it is not only a possible, but an actually operating cause, makes it of some importance to correct an erroneous impression, founded on that belief, that the interests of the different classes of society may be in permanent opposition to each

other. Mr. Ricardo, who could perceive no cause from which an increase of the revenues of the landed proprietors could possibly proceed, except "the "employment of additional labour without a pro-"portional return," was led by the unlucky narrowness of his system on this point to denounce the interests of the landlords as always opposed to those of every other class of the community.* While we have been taking a more comprehensive view of the sources of the increase of rents, and have been showing the manner in which that increase necessarily follows the concentration and improvement of cultivation, we have gathered materials which enable us to demonstrate the unsoundness of this repulsive doctrine. It is true that there are cases in which the landlords *may* derive a limited advantage from circumstances which are diminishing the means of the body of the people; but their permanent prosperity, and that gradual elevation of their revenue which sustains them in their relative position in the community, must emanate from more wholesome and more abundant sources.

If, indeed, the being in a position to derive occasional gain from the losses of others were sufficient to characterize any class of society as having interests in permanent hostility with those of their countrymen, Mr. Ricardo, to be consistent and just, should have made his denunciation more general, and included in it both the capitalists and the labourers; for it is not disputed that they too have,

* Ricardo, 'Essay on the Influence of a low Price,' &c., p. 20. "It follows, then, that the interest of the landlord is always opposed "to the interests of every other class in the community."

each of them, occasionally, interests which are adverse to those of the rest of the community; and that wages may be increased by a decrease of profits, and profits swelled by the decrease of wages, as certainly as rents may be elevated by encroachments on the revenues of the producing classes. But if we were seriously to argue thence, that the interests of all the different classes of the community are in constant and perpetual opposition to each other, the conclusion would arouse the suspicion of the most unwary inquirer. The fact is, that the prosperity which each class can grasp by the depression of others is by the laws of nature limited and insecure. The advantages which each may draw from sources of increasing wealth common to all, or at least injurious to none, are safe, and capable of being pushed to an extent of which the limits lie beyond our experience, or means of calculation. And in this respect there is no difference in the social position of the landlords and that of the other classes which compose the state.

When the revenues of any one class increase, that increase may in every case proceed from two causes: first, from an invasion of the revenues of some other class, the aggregate revenue of the state remaining what it was; or secondly, from increased production, leaving the revenues of all the other classes untouched, and presenting a clear addition to the aggregate revenue of the nation.

A little consideration will show us that it is only in the last, that is, the most advantageous manner, that the revenue of any class can increase *progressively* and securely in the progress of nations. We will trace this truth, first, in the case of the

labourers and capitalists, and then in that of the landlords.

The productive power of a people being stationary, wages may increase, we know, at the expense of profits; or, on the other hand, with the advance of the productive powers of the population, wages may increase while profits are undiminished. The power of production being stationary, we have already had occasion to show how small an increase in the rate of wages will produce a considerable depression of profits: and we have seen,* that supposing the capital employed to amount to five times the wages paid, an addition of one single shilling to every 10*s.* paid as wages would lower profits from 12 to 10 per cent. In the ordinary state of the world, the further progress of a rise of wages attended by such an effect would soon cease to be possible. Long before, in any one nation, the rate of profits had, in the course of such a process, been reduced to one-half their actual amount, capital would flow abroad, employment become more scarce, and the rise of wages be stayed. But if the increase of the rate of wages be accompanied by a corresponding or a greater increase of productive power, it may go on indefinitely without any deterioration, possibly with an increase of the rate of profits, and of the revenues of the capitalists; and need only cease when the productive powers of mankind have reached their ultimate limit. It is then, unquestionably, a momentary advantage to the labourer that his wages should increase at the expense of the profits of the capitalist. But his interests and those of the

* See p. 243.

capitalists are not therefore in perpetual opposition, because his prosperity, if it is to be permanent and progressive, can only exist under circumstances in which it is perfectly compatible with the undiminished means and revenues of his employers.

In like manner, the productive power of labour being stationary, the rate of profits may rise from a diminution of wages, and the capitalists have, therefore, a momentary advantage in the depression of the labouring classes. But the arrangements of Providence are such, that their great and permanent interests can safely rest on no such gloomy foundation. As the poverty and degradation of the population proceeds, the productive powers of the labouring classes, and, after a certain point, the security of property, diminish. We have an example of the first of these effects in the serfs of eastern Europe, and of the last in Ireland. The serf does but one-third of the labour of the well-paid freeman; and the Irish peasant, on his low wages, works little better, if compared either with the English peasant or with himself when less depressed. But a difference of two-thirds in productive power will alone more than balance any difference in the respective rates of wages of the best and of the worst paid workmen in Europe. The English capitalists then would lose by the establishment of a German or Irish rate of wages, if their workmen were to be replaced by a race as listless and inefficient as German boors or as Irish cottiers in their actual state of degradation. The inefficiency of the exertions of the labouring classes is not, however, the only circumstance which makes a low and decreasing rate of wages unfavourable to

the permanent prosperity of the capitalists. The accumulation of large masses of auxiliary capital cannot go on undisturbed in the midst of a degraded and turbulent population; and it is on the great accumulation of such capital, relatively to the numbers of the population, that the comparative revenues of the capitalists themselves, and their station and influence on the community, depend. In England profits are low and wages are high, but in no part of the world do the capitalists form so prosperous and important a body. Their revenue exceeds that of the proprietors of the soil, and equals at least half the wages of labour. If English wages were run down till the state of the labourers approached that of the Irish, their discontent and turbulence, added to habits of reluctant and inefficient labour, would make it neither profitable or safe to employ here the mass of capital at present used in production: and then, in spite of a rise in the *rate* of profits, the *mass* of profits realized, and the revenues, influence, and comparative importance of the owners of capital, must shrink to dimensions more nearly resembling those of other countries. Although the capitalists, therefore, may reap a momentary advantage from the depression of the labourers, yet their permanent prosperity cannot rest on such a basis. To proceed securely in a career of increasing wealth, they must be surrounded by workmen whom penury and degradation have not made either useless instruments of production, or dangerous neighbours. The interests of the capitalists and the labourers, although they may be occasionally in apparent opposition, are substantially and permanently in perfect har-

mony. It is the interest of each class that the other should thrive; and that additions to its own revenue should be derived solely from an increase in the productive powers of the industry of the country.

The position of the landlords in this respect is similar to that of the labourers and capitalists. There is a momentary gain, which they may snatch from the depression of the rest of the community; but they are not excluded from the operation of that just and benevolent law of Providence, which knits together the interests of society, by making fleeting and limited all advances in the revenues of any class which rest on the deprivation of others; and which permits a career of stable and indefinite increase only when the prosperity attained by one part goes hand in hand with that of all parts of the nation. An advance of rents, founded solely on a transfer to the landlords of a portion of the produce before enjoyed by the productive classes, must diminish what without such a transfer would have been the joint amount of wages and profits. Mr. Ricardo and his school contend that in such a case the revenue of the productive classes would become positively less than it was before; that the decrease in the amount of raw produce returned to given quantities of capital and labour could be balanced by no increase in the effects of non-agricultural industry; and they contend further, that this decrease must fall exclusively on the employers of labour, and diminish the rate of profit, which, according to them, must vary with each change in the returns to the capital last employed upon the land; on which returns they state the rate of profits

to be exclusively dependent.* Were we to concede the soundness of this view of the case, it would at once become evident how very limited the advantages must be which the landlords could derive from such a cause. When in different countries which have an easy intercourse with each other an ordinary rate of profit has been established, any peculiar cause which diminishes that rate in any one country has a tendency to drive capital to others. The rate of profit in England rests at a point somewhat below that of neighbouring countries, but if the rate be depressed below this inferior point, we know from experience that capital begins to escape very rapidly. A very short period, therefore, during which only very limited effects could be produced, must put an entire stop to a rise of rents founded only on a continuous fall of profits. And the landlords of an increasing country would soon be reduced to insignificance, were this the only source on which they could rely for the advance of their incomes, as the numbers and wealth of all the other classes were swelling round them.

To see, however, more distinctly, that the actual sources of the increase of the revenue of the landlords are perfectly compatible with the prosperity and undiminished wealth of the people, we must not confine ourselves to so imperfect a view of the causes of the increase of rents. A diminution in the share of producing classes in the produce is, as we must again repeat, certainly a possible, but as certainly only a limited and very rare source of an advance of the revenues of the landlords; that gradual in-

* Ricardo, pp. 118, 128. See the passages before quoted in the note at p. 245.

crease of their means, which keeps pace with the riches of other branches of the community, flows from healthier and more copious fountains.

We have seen that the accumulation and concentration of capital, and its gradually increasing efficiency as the power and skill of man advance, are causes of increase in the mass of rents of which the constant operation is established by the same laws which regulate the productive powers of the earth, and the progress of civilized nations in the art of cultivating it. But neither the increase of capital, nor the increase of agricultural science and power, can be rationally expected among a people the augmentation of whose numbers is attended at every step by an invasion, on the part of the landlords, of the interests of the cultivating classes. A rise of rents founded on such an invasion, if it is injurious to the people, is not less unfavourable to the progress of the revenue of the owners of the soil: it presents them with a momentary and limited profit, while it destroys the hopes of large and enduring improvement. We saw when examining the different classes of peasant rents, that, while they last, the depression of the cultivators stops the progress of those changes in the forms of tenure which the ease and interests of the landlords demand should be completed as fast as society is fit for them; and when the capitalist enters on the scene as a distinct character, it is obviously the interest of the proprietors that every spot of ground should receive the benefit of all the auxiliary capital which the wealth of the country can supply, made more and more efficient by all the skill and power which intellect, and knowledge, and experience can create:

These are sources of increased rents, which contain within themselves no causes of stagnation and decay, and which for an indefinite period may continue to buoy up the revenues and influence of the landed body, though the numbers and wealth of the other classes are multiplying rapidly around them. While these wholesome causes of increasing rents are in operation, the power and wealth of the country, we have seen, must be advancing, the territory must become capable of supporting a larger population, and the capital and revenue of that larger population must receive considerable accessions. The circumstances, therefore, which are the most essential to the continuous prosperity of the landlords are also most conducive to the increasing wealth and strength of the nation. The miserable gains which it is possible for them to wring from the necessities of an impoverished people are not less destructive to their own prospects of maintaining a permanent and progressive advance of income, than the same gains are injurious to the producing classes. Like the other classes of the community, then, they have an interest in diminishing the revenues of those who share with them the produce of the soil. As in the case of all the other classes, too, their gains from such a diminution are limited, scanty, and temporary; while the permanence and full development of their prosperity can only be secure when it goes hand in hand with the progress of the people in wealth, and power, and skill.

It was an error, therefore, to suppose that there is anything peculiar to the landlords in the fact that they have occasionally a limited interest opposed to that of the other bodies which compose the

state. It was a much graver error which led men to teach that their case forms an exception to that general rule of Providence which makes sterile and evanescent all advantages which any one class of the community can gain at the expense of the others: that they alone have no source of prosperity common to them with the whole population, and constitute a class marked by the miserable singularity of having no interests, during the progressive advance of national industry and wealth, but such as are hostile to those of all the rest of mankind.

We have seen, then, that rents may rise from a diminution in the return to the producing classes of the capital last employed upon the soil, followed by a transfer to the landlords of a portion of the produce of the old soils, sufficient to equalize the share of the producing classes on all the soils cultivated;—that the rent thus generated forms no addition to the aggregate national revenue:—that it makes the joint amount of wages and profits comparatively less, that is, less than it would have been had no diminution in the return to agricultural capital taken place:—that no positive decrease of the joint amount of wages and profits necessarily follows, because the increasing productive power of the non-agricultural portion of the community may balance, or more than balance, the decreasing power of agricultural industry:—that this cause of the rise of rents is not, like the two causes first examined, constantly in action as nations increase in wealth and numbers:—that its presence and influence in the elevation of rents are not proved by the circumstances usually quoted as the most certain indications of its operation:—that where the

relative numbers of the non-agricultural classes have been increasing, or where the *proportion* of the produce taken by the landlords has not increased, there is a strong and decisive reason to believe, that this cause has contributed nothing to any increase which has taken place in the rental of a country:—finally, that although the generation of rents from this particular source is prejudicial to the nation, the general interests of the landlords are not on this account hostile to the progress of the industry and wealth of the people, since their continuous prosperity rests always on other foundations.

We adduced facts and reasons to show, that "the "employment of additional labour without a pro- "portional return" has in truth had no share in elevating the rental of our own country; and have pointed out, that although it is, strictly speaking, a possible source of increased revenue of the landed proprietors, yet it is not, as the establishment of more efficient and complete cultivation is, a constant and necessary source of such an increase, wherever the wealth, and skill, and industry of a body of farmers are progressive.

We are conscious that this peculiar source of a possible rise of rents has been dwelt on at somewhat greater length than its relative importance may seem to warrant. The reasons for this have been already intimated. The influence of a decreasing fertility of the soils last cultivated on the progress of rents, and the manner in which the interests of the whole population are affected by the process, have lately attracted much peculiar and anxious attention, and become the basis of much fallacious reasoning and wild speculation. Sir Ed-

ward West and Mr. Malthus had pointed out, that the soils actually cultivated in agricultural countries were of very unequal quality, and that the actual prices of raw produce were barely sufficient, on some lands, to repay the expenses of cultivation with the ordinary rate of profit; while on others, the same prices did this, and left besides a surplus for rent. This fact once seen, it became evident that the relative value of raw produce depended not on the average cost of its production, but on the cost of producing a particular portion of it: that to secure the actual supply, the actual prices must be maintained, and could not be lessened, even though the rent paid for the better soils were abandoned to the tenants, or ceased to exist. It became evident, too, that any circumstances which made more expensive the cultivation of the inferior soils used would not diminish rents, but would raise prices, since the cultivator of the land which produced no rent must get his expenses and profit, or the supply would fail, and prices rise from that cause. The development of these facts threw considerable light on the circumstances which determine the exchangeable value of raw produce, and on the effects and incidence of taxation; and opened besides many new views of those subjects. It is not perhaps surprising, that the two writers last named should, in the first ardour of discovery, have been tempted to push the consequences of the facts to which they were drawing the attention of the public somewhat farther than subsequent and more comprehensive inquiries would warrant. And, accordingly, both Sir Edward and Mr. Malthus, after pointing out that, as cultivation extends itself, the

capital employed upon soils of different qualities produces very unequal returns, show an occasional disposition to take it for granted, that in the progress of agriculture every additional portion of capital applied to the soils must produce a less return than that which preceded it:—a distinct and very different proposition; entirely without foundation, when viewed relatively to capital employed in developing the powers of the old soils; and which, when confined to the case of capital laid out upon new and inferior soils, allows nothing for the progress of human power. The unsoundness of this assumption has already been pointed out. In the treatises of Sir Edward West and Mr. Malthus, however, these opinions were merely exaggerations of the consequences of an important truth, presented to the world without being sufficiently sifted. When adopted by Mr. Ricardo, they became unluckily the sole foundation of an extensive system of political philosophy, embracing the whole subject of rents, wages, profits, and taxes; and attempting to explain, in a series of logical deductions, drawn from this narrow foundation, all the causes which in progress of nations regulate the revenues of the different classes of society.* It was of course essen-

* "In treating on the subject of the profits of capital, it is necessary to consider the principles which regulate the rise and fall of rent; as rent and profits, it will be seen, have a very intimate connection with each other." Ricardo, 'Essay on the Influence of low Price of Corn on the Profits of Stock,' Introduction, p. 1. "The general profits of stock depend *wholly* on the profits of the last portion of capital employed on the land." Ricardo, ibid. p. 20. "But I think it may be most satisfactorily proved, that in every society advancing in wealth and population, independently of the effect produced by liberal or scanty wages, general profits must fall unless there be improvements in agriculture, or corn can be imported at a

tial to the establishment of this system, that every other apparent cause of increasing rents should be proved illusory. Hence the attempts made to deny that the general increase of the produce of the soil which follows the accumulation of capital upon it can possibly raise rents, or be beneficial to the landlords, unless some of that capital be laid out without a diminished return, and the share of the producing classes be reduced. Hence, too, similar attempts to prove that agricultural improvements of every description, even those by which the expenses of obtaining produce are made less, are, for a time, absolutely prejudicial to the interests of the proprietors, and only begin to be useful to them when the cost of getting produce on the soils governing price has been increased.* From a system which saw no possible mode of increasing the revenues of the landlords which was not founded on a corresponding decrease of those of the producing

"cheaper price. *It seems the necessary result of the principles which have "been stated to regulate the progress of rent.*" Ricardo, ibid. p. 22. But those who are at all acquainted with Mr. Ricardo's writings will want no extracts to prove to them the manner in which his notions, as to the one peculiar source of rents, served as a basis for all his speculations on the distribution of wealth.

* "If, by the introduction of the *turnip husbandry*, or by the use "of a more invigorating manure, I can obtain the same produce with "less capital, I shall *lower* rent." Ricardo, 'on Political Economy,' 2nd Edit. p. 68. The reference to this strange passage was mislaid, or it would have been quoted before. Mr. R. proceeds to argue that, in the case he is supposing, land would be necessarily thrown out of cultivation, "and a different and more productive portion will be that "which will form the standard from which every other will be reck-"oned." The reader has seen (p. 225) in what manner the introduction of the turnip husbandry, and its gradual spread as the numbers of the people were increasing, actually *raised the rental* of a great part of England, and pushed tillage to a variety of soils before uncultivated, many of which also paid a rent.

classes, it followed necessarily that the interests of the landlords and those of the other classes of society were in a state of perpetual hostility. And this gloomy conclusion assumed a yet darker complexion when blended with some other errors of the same school. As all compensation from the increasing power of non-agricultural industry was overlooked, the reduction in the returns to agricultural labour and capital, which according to them follows a people in every attempt to increase the quantity of raw produce obtained from its territory, occasions a positive decrease in the revenues of the producing classes. The share of the labourers they believed to be, except of short intervals of time, invariable: the decrease of the revenues of the producing classes must affect, therefore, exclusively the rate of profits. But as they assumed the people to be fed in all cases from accumulated capital *alone*, and capital to be accumulated from profits *exclusively*, and the power of the owners of profits to accumulate to be dependent on the *rate* of profit, it followed that at every fall in the *rate* of profit the national power of accumulation was diminished, and a disastrous check given to the sole means of providing for an increasing population. There is no one of these various positions which is not partially or altogether false; but to persons possessed with an opinion of their truth, the great original error of supposing every increase of rent to indicate a corresponding diminution in the returns yielded by agriculture to the producing classes seemed to lead at once to the conclusion, that at every step in the elevation of rents the elements of national prosperity were weakened, and

the other classes of the community exposed to corresponding privations. These views are embodied in many striking passages of Mr. Ricardo's writings, which form the frame-work of a system erected by him and finished by others who have adopted his views. Those who will take the trouble of turning to his publications will find him declaring in different passages, some of which have been already quoted, that the increasing rents proceed always, not from additional wealth created on the soil, but from a transfer of wealth which before existed into the hands of the landlords: that rent invariably proceeds from the application of additional capital to agriculture with a diminished return: that nothing which does not alter the relative fertility of the lands cultivated can increase rents: that improvements in agriculture do not increase rents:* that such improvements lower rents at least for a time, and lessen the means of the landlords, their ability to pay taxes, &c.: that increasing rents bring no addition to the resources of a country: that every rise in rents is a mere transfer of value, advantageous only to the landlords, and proportionably injurious to the consumers: and, finally, that the interests of the landlords are *always* opposed to those of every other class in the community.† The erroneous views in which these positions originated proceeded no doubt from imperfect observation and hasty reasoning; there is no reason whatever to believe that they were prompted by malignity,

* See too, on this point, Macculloch.

† "It follows, then, that the interest of the landlord is always "opposed to the interest of every other class of the community."—Ricardo, 'Essay on the Influence of a low Price of Corn on the Profits of Stock,' p. 20.

or put in circulation to create mischief. But, however calm and free from thought of evil may be the philosophy from which false political theories are engendered, they are no sooner afloat and current in the world than they necessarily come into contact with prejudices and passions which convert them into sources of very serious delusions. Mistaken views and excited feelings as to the sources of the prosperity of the landed proprietors, like those which have lately prevailed in England, have a double bad effect. They lead the people to look with jaundiced and angry eyes upon augmentations in the revenue of the proprietors, which are in truth only so many indications and effects of a great and most desirable increase in the resources of the country. And when discussions have arisen as to practical measures, the same mistaken views and feelings have evidently served, first to make one party querulous and angry, and then the other, as if in self-defence, suspicious and reluctant.

SECTION VIII.

SUMMARY OF FARMERS' RENTS.

THE fact that these rents prevail almost exclusively in England is sufficient to fix upon them earnest attention. They deserve it on another account. There are indications, faint in some quarters, stronger in others, but discernible in many, that the European nations will all, sooner or later, approach partially, at least, to a similar system. We have shown reasons for believing that their progress towards it

will on the whole be very slow; but still it is not the less true that the composition and capabilities of countries in which farmers' rents prevail must be distinctly understood, if we would thoroughly comprehend either the peculiar economical condition of our own country, or the probable direction and character of the future career of our neighbours. It certainly will be wise, while devoting ourselves to this task, not to repeat an error which has blinded many late writers to truths of a yet more general application: which has led them, while speculating on circumstances peculiar to themselves, sometimes wholly to neglect those ruder and more prevalent systems, the results of which decide the fortunes and condition of the largest portion of the human race: at other times, to confound and confuse things and circumstances essentially different, under the cover of imperfect analogies, made more illusory by the careless use of general terms, and idle attempts to reason deductively from them.

We are all, as Englishmen, occasionally more liable than could be wished to some of these mistakes: we are much too prone to consider the state of society in which we exist as a type of all others, and this narrow and mistaken assumption is necessarily the parent of much ignorance and many errors. England is, in fact, at the extreme end and verge of the economical career of nations, as far as that career is yet known; at a point not yet reached by any other considerable community; and one which has placed her in a position, if not more desirable, yet very different from theirs.* We see men here,

* I ought, perhaps, to except the Low Countries; but I shall have occasion to show hereafter that although farmers' rents prevail ex-

in agriculture as well as in all the other branches of human industry, aiding their native powers of production by the use of an unusually large mass of accumulated stock, which the skill and invention of successive generations has been tasked so to apply, as to add gradually but constantly to the productive powers of the existing race. This capital, and the power it has created, in their separate application to the art of agriculture, enable the soil to support a population of which the whole amount is triple that of the cultivators. The owners of an imposing mass of accumulated force themselves maintain and employ the whole of the industrious population.* The proprietors of the soil are no longer exclusively either rulers in peace or leaders in war, and are not the direct sources of subsistence to any part of the population. The nation is influenced by revenues, as it is governed by institutions, in estimating which the land-owners appear only as a part. The national territory and the estates of the proprietors of land preserve of course precisely the same extent, while the wealth and numbers of classes wholly independent of the soil are swelling and multiplying almost indefinitely. Are the fortunes of the land-owners in the meanwhile stationary? Do they sink gradually into insignificance? Do they cease to occupy a useful and prominent station in the community? None of these things happen. By the consequences of a part of the physical constitution of the earth, from

tensively in those countries, their economical position is still very different from that of England.

* Exclusive of menial servants, of course.

the effects of which communities of men could not escape, were they perverse enough to wish it, the landed body preserves a wholesome and modified, though no more an exclusive, influence; and its members remain important elements of a society in which they are no longer dominant. As the knowledge and skill of the cultivators discover the means of applying a fair portion of the increasing capital of the community to the important purpose of bringing into play the latent powers of the soil, and of enlarging the means of supporting a growing nation, a new species of rent exclusively prevails: the fresh power thus applied, forcing greater results from the better soils, produces a fund which forms no part of the ordinary remuneration either of the labourers who till the lands, or of the capitalists who maintain, direct, and assist them; and when once identified with this fund, of which we have seen that the progress and amount are quite indefinite, the incomes of the landlords continue progressive with the advancing resources of the country. It is thus that that inequality in the productive powers of different portions of the earth's surface, which at the commencement of the agricultural labours of mankind exercises no perceptible influence on the origin or on the forms of rent, and but little on its variation, shows at last its peculiar importance; and, during the matured and improved advance of nations, is sufficient of itself to secure for the landed body a steady and necessary, though a limited and innoxious advance of their incomes.

We have already seen the utter fallacy of the notion that this progress must be attended at every

step with a decrease in the productiveness of the soils which govern prices, or with a consequent pressure on the means of any class of society.

OBSERVATIONS ON SOME CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE ACTUAL POSITION OF ENGLAND.

In surveying this subject of farmers' rents, it is not easy, perhaps it is not desirable, to avoid quitting the contemplation of them in a general and abstract point of view, for the purpose of applying the principles which arise out of that survey to the case of England, and to the peculiarities of its actual condition: and meaning to steer as clear as possible of everything commonly called *politics*, there are a few observations of this description which I cannot turn aside from making.

It is, we have seen, on the increasing wealth and progressive skill of the agricultural capitalist, the farmer, that the steady progress of the landed body is dependent. Not a step can be made in agriculture, not one improvement, not a single portion of new power introduced into the art of cultivation, which does not, if generally adopted, by its unequal effects over the surface of the country, raise the mass of rents. The property and the energy and mental activity of the farmers are thus the mainstay, the sole permanent reliance of the landlords. Every circumstance which diminishes the means, the security, or the hopefulness and energy of these agents of cultivation must be proportionably detrimental to the best interests of the proprietors. I think there is little doubt that if the changes and fluctuations which have occurred since the peace had not crippled the means and damped the enter-

prise of the farmers, they would, by spreading improved modes of cultivation to large districts, as yet impervious to them, and by a continuous progress of power and skill, have produced a considerable mass of produce rents which do not now exist. The non-existence of these is unquestionably a serious and gratuitous misfortune to the proprietors, perhaps the greatest they have experienced; for had it not occurred, their incomes, in spite of the altered circumstances of the country, might have been buoyed up to something like their former level.

But proprietors do not suffer alone, when the national progress in developing the powers of its soil is stayed and thwarted by the farmers being impoverished and disheartened. The non-agricultural classes suffer in their turn, and that in a manner and to an extent which is not the less formidable because it is not easy accurately to track the loss in its progress and diffusion, or to measure its precise amount. It is probable that, after allowing for their own consumption, the value of the produce bartered by the agriculturists with the non-agriculturists is not less than 100 millions. This fact is well adapted to show the mutual dependence of the two great classes of the state. Let us suppose that, scared by losses and apprehensions, the farmers withdraw one-fourth of their annual expenditure from the task of cultivation. This is a process which every one acquainted with country business will know might be quietly and almost imperceptibly effected, by using less labour, or by farming less highly in a variety of ways. If a proportionate diminution in production were to follow,

and, consequent on that, a similar diminution in the home traffic between the agriculturists and the non-agriculturists, the decrease in the demand for the produce of the industry of these last would be considerably more than equivalent to the decrease of demand which would follow the destruction of one-half the whole foreign trade of the country. I do not say that such a case either has occurred, or is likely to occur, although I have heard some strong opinions on that subject from persons well entitled to be listened to with attention; but an effect much less than this would unquestionably be more than equal to the sudden and complete stoppage of the most important branch of our export trade; and an effect even greater than this would certainly follow any sudden and violent attack upon the means of the farmers. The results of any decrease in the domestic demand would be spread over a larger surface, and would therefore be less intensely felt on any one point, and create less concentrated clamour, than the results of a decrease to a similar extent when felt in the export market alone; but it would be an obvious delusion to suppose that the resources and prosperity of the whole body of non-agriculturists would not be affected to precisely the same extent in the one case as in the other.

It is difficult not to believe that part of the distress which seems to have lighted from some mysterious cause on many classes of the community is to be traced to the imperceptible contraction of this part of the home demand. There are persons doubtless who think that any possible reduction of home may be compensated by the extension of foreign demand. This in practice is only true to a

certain extent; but this question would provoke discussion, and we will suppose it true to any extent. Still it is clear that foreign demand is not likely to be suddenly created to counteract the effects of sudden contractions of the domestic traffic; and that therefore a period of considerable distress and languor, perhaps ruin and calamity, must follow all such contractions.

It is the evident interest of the non-agriculturists, then, that, whatever changes take place in foreign demand, the home market should be prosperous, because it is their largest market; and that it should not vary, because such variations must affect their own prosperity. If the unchecked career of the farmers is essentially connected with the prosperous fortunes both of the landed proprietors and of the non-agricultural classes, it must obviously be closely connected with the prosperous fortune of the nation; and no plan of legislation can be sound and wise which does not cautiously avoid any measures likely to destroy either the means or the spirit of the agricultural capitalists. Now, considering how many interests are bound up in the results of wise and cautious legislation, whenever the interests of the agricultural capitalists are concerned, it is singularly unlucky that such a question as that of the "Corn Laws" should exist, which seems fated never to be approached without provoking an angry and headlong spirit in one great division of the nation, and a most mischievous temper of fear and depression in the other division. Yet it is admitted that, in the present financial situation of the country, corn-laws of some description must exist. Nor is there in truth any great dispute about the main

principle: the establishment of a "protection from peculiar burthens" is what all profess to be content with.

But here the real difficulty of the question begins; what are the peculiar burthens sustained by the agriculturists? And it is because I can point out two important measures, the effecting which would go far to remove the difficulty of deciding this question, or, at any rate, would make that difficulty less decisive and important, that I have ventured into this digression.

There are two payments made by the farmer which, while they remain in their present state, will continue to confuse the subject so much that neither party to the discussion is likely to be satisfied; and these are Tithes and Poor Rates. The real incidence and the effects of both of these we shall explain more at large when speaking of taxation. The incidence of tithes is certainly in every particular instance a question which involves some statistical difficulties, not because the principles which enable us to determine the question are abstruse or obscure, but because that incidence is different in countries differently circumstanced as to the actual position and state of their agricultural population. In the particular case of England, however, in the first place it can be made abundantly clear that tithes, when first created, must have been, in the then circumstances of the English population, meant to act as a rent charge; and, in the second place, it seems agreed on all hands not only that tithes should be put upon such a footing as to be no real burthen on agriculture, to cause no addition to the growing price of produce; but

further, that they should be placed upon such a footing that it may be palpable and clear to all branches and classes of the population, on and off the land, that they are not such a burthen, and do not cause such an addition. Now this can only be effected by a general commutation. What has passed in Parliament may be taken as a proof that the leaders of the Church are perfectly willing to co-operate in the adoption of any rational plan of this kind. Should the legislature set about the task with a serious conviction of its usefulness and importance, and intrust the execution of it to the hands of persons acting on sound views, and in a frank and honest spirit of conciliation, its very few difficulties would quickly disappear. On the immense importance of such a change in a political and religious, as well as in an economical point of view, it cannot be necessary to enlarge.

The poor-laws present a much more pressing and alarming mass of evil, as they do also much more serious difficulties. In the first place, the effects of the poor-laws as a mere economical evil, as affecting the interests and calculations of the farmer, and the growing prices of corn, are considerably underrated. These laws are first a burthen, the direct and indirect pressure of which it is difficult for the farmer himself to calculate, and which it is probable therefore that in all cases he exaggerates; and in the next place they form a much more, *a very much more,* serious addition to the necessary price of agricultural produce in England than a mere arithmetical calculation would lead us to conclude they did: and they do this because their pressure is unequally distributed, and falls by far the most heavily

on those poorer soils, the expense of cultivating which must in the long run (abstracting from the effects of foreign importation) determine the average prices of raw produce. This circumstance alone forms a sufficiently urgent reason for attempting such alterations as might get rid of this unnatural, and certainly not desirable, interference with the level of English prices.

But all merely economical considerations really sink into utter insignificance when we turn to the fearful mass of moral and political mischief which they have brought into action.* It is not too much to say that they have thoroughly destroyed the happiness of the agricultural peasantry, and corrupted their habits as labourers and as men. These effects have shown themselves but too distinctly. The late disturbances among that peasantry only sheer ignorance could attribute to any peculiar actual pressure. The temper, and feelings, and delusions in which they originated have been forming for some time. The outbreak might have been foreseen by all (and it was foreseen by some) familiar with the practical working and results of the system: and unless that system be annihilated, or at least essentially and fundamentally altered, those disturbances will, it may confidently be expected from the nature of the case, have been neither the last nor the most dangerous. And still, evil and dangerous as they have been, they were only one

* It is from no theoretical views that I speak, but from an intimate and assuredly a most painful experience, when I say this. I ought, however, perhaps to mention that my personal experience has been confined to the agricultural labourers, and to the counties of Kent and Sussex.

effect and indication of the miserably distorted and irritated feelings of which they were the result. The legislation of the country on this subject has been bad, and deserves unquestionably much of the blame which has been shifted to the shoulders of those who have administered its regulations. But neither, certainly, has their administration been blameless. Bad laws have laid the foundation; and then, sometimes by bad management with very good intentions, and sometimes by bad management with very questionable intentions, the poor have gradually been brought into a condition in which they are led to attribute unhesitatingly every privation and every disappointment to those neighbours under whose control they find themselves, and who are to them the visible source of all the good and evil of their lot. When men are in this position, the consequences are most fatal, though most natural. Can we wonder that their tempers had become soured, and their views of what is reasonable and unreasonable, of what is right and wrong, perverted? The fact is, that there had been for some time spreading through this class of our population an angry spirit of dislike to their immediate superiors, the most dangerous germ of political disorder; and in the mean time their own principles and habits have assumed a character over which it is impossible not to mourn; which far-seeing persons may easily trace back to causes over which the poor themselves had no control; but which is extremely ill calculated to conciliate the confidence, or the good will, or forbearance, of those who have to deal with it; and tends therefore by its conse-

quences to perpetuate and increase distrust and ill-will between the labourers and those who have the management of them and of their fortunes.

We have had from these causes a painful instance of the connexion of economical and moral evil. The moral havoc has indeed been complete. The honesty of the labourers, their self-respect, their value for their character as workmen, all hope of bettering their condition in life by good conduct, industry, and prudence, their sense of their mutual duties and claims as parents and children, all feelings and habits, in short, that contribute to make men good citizens and good men, have been undermined and impaired or utterly destroyed.

No remedy for these evils in the condition of the poor deserves the name of a wise and statesmanlike measure which is not of a nature sufficiently comprehensive to offer some promise of bringing healing and health to all these diseased points. I do not know that such a remedy need be despaired of: the plan of using allotments of land for such a purpose has been sufficiently discussed and tried to enable us to judge of its capabilities. If the country was enabled by the necessary modifications of the existing laws, and by some new ones, to adopt that plan efficiently into general practice, it might enable the agricultural districts not merely to palliate the actual pressure, the threatening danger, from the poor laws, but to do what must be effectually done if the moral mischief is to be eradicated, and that is, to annihilate the connexion between the able-bodied labourers and those laws altogether and for ever.* In the mean time, it would be a

* Individual impressions upon a subject of such mighty national

dangerous experiment for the governors of a state so situated to fold their hands and wait for what is to happen next. The slow and too often perplexed and thwarted progress of individual efforts can lead to no general results of sufficient power to arrest in time the progress of the moral pestilence which has long been pursuing our footsteps and is already breathing on our necks. Legislation must be resorted to, and that comprehensive and decisive, as the occasion demands, but carried on (it need hardly be said) in a spirit as calm and benevolent as it is firm and decided, and guided ever, it may be hoped, by the great aim of promoting the comforts and happiness of the labouring class, as the best and surest foundation of the prosperity and peace of the nation at large.

I must add, while on this subject, that no plan for extinguishing the claims of able-bodied labourers on their parishes will appear to me either just or expedient which is not calculated to place them, not only ultimately, but at every step of the change, in a position not merely as good as that in which they are now, but better. Without forgetting or palliating their actual faults, still we should remember that the miserable system by which their better

importance, I am aware, do and ought to count for but little; but as I have been led to the subject, it may not, perhaps, be presumptuous to state, that my own observations have led to a strong belief that such a plan might be devised and carried with cheerfulness and popularity into general execution, and this with very desirable economical, as well as most important moral and political effects; and that, if regulated and executed under the guidance of sound views and with reasonable precautions, it need not be feared that the many good effects of such a plan would be marred by the results of the principle of population, or be neutralized by any train of accompanying evils.

principles, and in some measure their freedom of body and mind, have been bartered as it were piece-meal for doles from the poors'-rate, was neither devised nor desired by them; and it will be in vain and unjust to call upon them to make efforts to disentangle themselves from its effects, except they can distinctly see that it is not risk, or loss, or suffering, but gain and reward which are proffered to them.

It will be recollected that the tithe and poor-laws have only been considered here as bearing on the general question of the corn-laws, and through that question on the harmony of the agricultural and non-agricultural classes, and on the uninterrupted perception by both of them of their common and inseparable interests. To return then more distinctly and exclusively to this point of view. If we suppose the tithes commuted and the poor-rates done away with or reduced to a very small sum, then the farmer, in estimating his peculiar burthens, would be relieved from a feeling of indefinite pressure, and from many vague fears of risk and loss, which are kept alive and irritated by the existence of those payments in their present state. This effected, a scale of duties might probably be devised which should be both fixed and moderate. Till this is done it is very much to be feared that no corn-laws which are really equitable will ever appear to the farmer to give him sufficient protection, while the non-agricultural classes will be but too easily persuaded that they add exorbitantly and unjustly to the price of provisions. The ceaseless collision of such opinions will necessarily keep on foot hostile and angry feelings, and be destructive

of that confidence and frank co-operation between the different orders and classes of the community, without which in times of peril, and even in times of peace, a state is shorn of more than half its strength.

But a fixed and moderate duty permanently established,* and angry feelings on the one side and exaggerated fears of change on the other finally quelled, the farmer might once more begin gradually to accumulate, and gradually to find new modes of employing fresh quantities of capital. The consequences of a diffused and skilful employment of such fresh farming capital have already been pointed out. England offers still a large field for agricultural enterprise and improvements. The best methods of cultivation already known extend to no great proportion of her surface; and when these have been generally diffused, the career of the cultivators may still be for ages progressive. Superior as the English agriculture is, there are many indications that it is still only approaching, that it is far from having reached, the term of its power. The introduction of mechanical or chemical forces which will displace much of the animal power now used; the discovery of fresh and more prolific grasses and vegetables to be cultivated by the plough or spade; the gradual breaking up of much of the ground over which cattle now roam; the raising a greater *proportion* of the more valuable crops which contribute directly or indirectly to hu-

* It will again be remembered that I consider the commutation of tithes and change of poor-laws essential preliminaries to this measure. No allowance in the rate of duty for those payments, as they are at present assessed, will, I fear, ever produce anything but dissatisfaction in any class.

man subsistence; and a general advance in the efficiency of the many aids to human labour used by the husbandman;—these are all improvements, the gradual establishment of which it is so far from extravagant to expect, that it is perhaps more like extravagance to doubt that many of them are close at hand.

One effect of such new power gained by agriculture will unquestionably be the reclaiming and gradually fertilizing a considerable portion of the large part of the soil of the country which is now unproductive; and while the grappling with the wild land and the multiplication of means and power on the old are going on, we may, judging of the future from the past, rationally hope that the power of agriculture will be increasing, and that the population of the country will be maintained by the exertions of a diminished proportion of its laborious hands. It has been already pointed out, it is hoped with sufficient clearness, that during such a progress the mass of rents must be constantly increasing. In a country cultivated by farmers, with every forward movement of the people in numbers, wealth, knowledge, and skill, the landed body, borne up by the swelling wave, will be lifted to a station in which their means and influence will be adapted to the fresh position of the population. The causes of this advancement are deeply seated in the physical constitution of the earth. The funds which support it are injurious to no class; they cannot be destroyed or lessened: their existence and increase are secured by the same unfailing laws which regulate those unequal returns which the varied surface of the earth must

ever make to the labours bestowed upon it. The enduring interests of the landed proprietors are thus indissolubly bound up and connected with the means, the enterprise, and the success of the agricultural capitalists. Temporary advantages in their bargains with their tenantry or in their arrangements with the state are to them objects necessarily of inferior, sometimes of only illusory benefit. The fortunes, the station, the comparative influence and means of their order are always therefore best guarded and preserved by them when, keeping aloof from all that may embroil or hinder the general progress of the nation in wealth and skill, they use their individual influence and their political functions to promote such systems only of national policy and finance as are just and moderate, likely, therefore, to be steady and durable, and to leave a free course to those wholesome causes which promote their own peculiar interests only as identified with those of the nation.

CONCLUSION.

The task of observing the revenues annually derived from the soil by its owners is finished.

We have marked the laws which determine the amount of *rents* under all their many forms and characters. We have traced them to their origin in the early appropriation of the soil; in its power to yield more to the rudest efforts of man than the bare sustenance of its cultivators; and in the necessity which, in the infancy of agricultural communities, binds the peasant to the task of tilling the earth, because it is thus only that he can earn the

food on which he is to exist. We have followed them afterwards to those more limited spots in which an advance in the state of society, and the introduction of a body of agricultural capitalists (not necessarily dependent on the soil for subsistence), have limited rents to those surplus profits which can be realised on particular spots of ground. Perhaps this is the place to notice an attempt which, it has been suggested to me, may still be made to reduce all rents to rents of this last description. Those, it has been said, who maintain that rents always consist in unequal returns to equal portions of capital, and in such unequal returns alone, may still refuse to admit that the history which has been given of the nature and origin of peasants' rents is any refutation of their narrow system. I should not have anticipated such an attempt; but I can conceive it possible.

There often exists unquestionably among the labour or produce rents paid by every class of peasant tenantry a portion of the payment which may be traced to the superior quality of some parts of the soil. The landlord of a serf peasantry gets more labour from the same space when the land is good than he does when it is bad. The landlord of ryots, metayers, or cottiers, finds his produce or money rents greater on the good soils than on the inferior. We have already seen, however, that such a difference has nothing to do with the origin or with the form of such rents, and exists as a quantity unknown or unobserved by those who pay, or those who receive them, amidst the action of the causes which have been pointed out as practically determining their variations. There is one very limited

and peculiar form of society in which this difference does afford a correct measure of the rents paid by the agricultural capitalists, who constitute the body of the tenantry. But out of the peculiar rents paid in these limited districts, first to form a narrow definition of the word rent, and then to attempt forcibly to include under this word the payments made by the tillers of the earth over the whole of its surface, is to attempt to make the realities of things bend and circumscribe themselves within the more manageable but arbitrary compass to which we may wish to confine our reasonings: it is to abandon the task of observation by which our knowledge should be earnt, that we may create an unreal foundation for systems which, as far as they profess to be general, must necessarily be visionary and false; which can be serviceable only in the work of amusing ourselves and deluding others; and must end in leaving us ignorant of the origin, progress, and effects of the relations between landlord and tenant over ninety-nine parts in a hundred of the cultivated globe. I need not, I hope, press this point farther. The whole of these pages present the proper answer to such an attempt. They have effected little, if they have not shown that it is by no such puerile efforts to make reasoning supply the place of knowledge that we can gather practical wisdom from inquiries into the economical condition of the great family of mankind.

The existence of the revenue which is derived from lands forms, in the very dawn of civilization, the most important element of its progress. It is the fund from which communities derive their orna-

ments and their strength. It supplies states with leaders in war and rulers in peace; gives birth to the useful and the elegant arts; and yields, directly or indirectly, those means and opportunities of leisure which are the parents of literature and of all accumulated and transmitted knowledge.

If the existence and general progress of rents is identical with the extent and growth of the sources of civilization, their peculiar forms exercise a no less dominant influence on all the most important distinguishing characteristics of nations and of classes of nations. Nor is this the case only in the infancy of communities; we have already seen that, with the exception of our country, and of one or two others, all, even the leading people of the earth, are still agricultural; that is, by far the largest portion of their industrious population is employed in agriculture; and we have, too, good reason to believe that their condition in this respect will change slowly where it changes at all. But among nations so situated (forming the majority of the inhabitants of the world) so it is, and ever must be, that the productive powers of their population, their joint wealth and strength, the elements of most of their political institutions, and of many of their moral characteristics, can only be understood and weighed after a thorough investigation into the habits, the ties, the relations, the revenues, to which the occupation of the land they exist on has given birth, and which it continues to maintain. It is from such an investigation alone, therefore, that we must acquire the power of estimating the actual condition, or of judging of the future prospects of the majority of our fellow men.

Of the great leading divisions which separate the agricultural nations of the earth into distinct masses, I have attempted to draw a distinct outline. There are, however, probably within the limits of each division instances of exceptions, and modifications which may have escaped my notice, and which exercise some influence over the circumstances and institutions of individual communities. If I should succeed in directing the attention of others to the points which I have pointed out as important in the tenures and habits of agricultural nations, some account of those modifications will probably be hereafter supplied. In the mean time, as I am conscious that the wide outline I have drawn, and such details as I have introduced, are faithful and impartial, I cannot, and do not doubt that the progressive supply of detailed information will confirm the principles which I have pointed out, while it may probably modify and correct to some extent their local application.

The rents paid by the smallest, but to us the most interesting class of tenantry, agricultural capitalists, or farmers, I have treated with Mr. Malthus and others simply as *surplus profits*. The view, however, taken here of the different modes by which these surplus profits may increase and accumulate on the soil is, I believe, new. Certainly it is cheering, and strips away at once all that was harsh and repulsive in the false aspect lately so laboriously given to the causes and sources of increase in this class of rents.

During the progress of the whole subject, abstracting from all difference in the forms of rents and in the character and the relations between the

cultivators and proprietors, one great truth has been placed, it is hoped, on the secure foundation of a patient and copious induction. I have had pleasure in introducing the evidence of it wherever it has occurred, and I shall conclude with it. *In no one position of society, during no one period of the progress of civilization, do the real interests of the proprietors of the soil cease to be identical with those of the cultivators, and of the community to which they both belong.* But even this truth itself, if the views which I have with some labour arrived at do not deceive me, will, in the future progress of our subject, appear to be included in one yet more cheering, because more comprehensive, namely, that all systems are essentially false and delusive which suppose that the permanent gain and advantage of any one class of the community can be founded on the loss of another class; because the same Providence which has knit together the affections and sympathies of mankind, by so many common principles of action and sources of happiness, has, in perfect consistency with its own purposes, so arranged the economical laws which determine the social condition of the various classes of communities of men, as to make the permanent and progressive prosperity of each essentially dependent on the common advance of all.

Note. It has been suggested to me that I have hardly dwelt enough on the possibility of confounding the character of the Ryots as tenants, and their claims as hereditary occupiers of the soil. I have added a note, VIII. in the Appendix, in which this point is considered, with a particular reference to Col. Tod's late work on Rajast'han.

APPENDIX.

Note to Preface, p. xix.

HERSCHEL *on the Study of Natural Philosophy.* Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*, No. 14, p. 67.—We have thus pointed out to us, as the great, and indeed only ultimate source of our knowledge of nature and its laws, EXPERIENCE; by which we mean, not the experience of one man only, or of one generation, but the accumulated experience of all mankind in all ages, registered in books or recorded by tradition. But experience may be acquired in two ways: either, first, by noticing facts as they occur, without any attempt to influence the frequency of their occurrence, or to vary the circumstances under which they occur; this is OBSERVATION: or, secondly, by putting in action causes and agents over which we have control, and purposely varying their combinations, and noticing what effects take place: this is EXPERIMENT. To these two sources we must look as the fountains of all natural science. It is not intended, however, by thus distinguishing observation from experiment, to place them in any kind of contrast. Essentially they are much alike, and differ rather in degree than in kind; so that, perhaps, the terms *passive* and *active observation* might better express their distinction; but it is, nevertheless, highly important to mark the different states of mind in inquiries carried on by their respective aids, as well as their different effects in promoting the progress of science. In the former, we sit still and listen to a tale, told us, perhaps obscurely, piecemeal, and at long intervals of time, with our attention more or less awake. It is only by after-rumination that we gather its full import; and often, when the opportunity is gone by,

we have to regret that our attention was not more particularly directed to some point which, at the time, appeared of little moment, but of which we at length appreciate the importance. In the latter, on the other hand, we cross-examine our witness, and by comparing one part of his evidence with the other, while he is yet before us, and reasoning upon it in his presence, are enabled to put pointed and searching questions, the answer to which may at once enable us to make up our minds. Accordingly it has been found invariably, that in those departments of physics where the phenomena are beyond our control, or into which experimental inquiry, from other causes, has not been carried, the progress of knowledge has been slow, uncertain, and irregular; while in such as admit of experiment, and in which mankind have agreed to its adoption, it has been rapid, sure, and steady.

I. Page 6.

Narrative of a Visit to Brazil, Chili, Peru, and the Sandwich Islands, during the Years 1821 *and* 1822, *by* Charles Farquhar Mathison, Esq., p. 449.—The King then is a complete autocrat—all power, all property, all persons are at his disposal: the chiefs receive grants of land from him, which they divide and let out again in lots to their dependants, who cultivate it for the use of the chief, reserving a portion for their own subsistence. The cultivators are not paid for their labour, nor, on the other hand, do they pay a regular rent for the land. They are expected to send presents of pigs, poultry, tarrow, and other provisions, to the chief, from time to time, together with any little sums of money which they may have acquired in trade, or any other property which it may suit the fancy or the convenience of the great man to take. This arbitrary system is a sad hindrance to the prosperity of the tenant; for if he is disposed to be industrious, and bring his land into good cultivation, or raise a good breed of live stock, and becomes rich in possessions, the chief is

soon informed of it, and the property is seized for his use, whilst the farmer loses the fruit of all his labours. This state of things, as between the King and his chiefs, is little more than theoretical; but as between the chiefs and their dependants, it exists mischievously in practice: hence, the great stimulus to industry being removed, the people live and vegetate, without making any exertions beyond what the command of the chief and the care of their own subsistence force upon them. One day in a week, or a fortnight, as occasion may require, the tenants are required to work upon the private estate of the chief. I have seen hundreds—men, women, and children,—at once employed in this way on the tarrow plantations: all hands turn out, for they assist each other in a body, and thus get through the work with greater expedition and ease. When a kanaka, or tenant, refuses to obey the order of his chief, the most severe and summary punishment is inflicted on him, namely, confiscation of his property. An instance in point happened to occur while I was staying at Whyaronah. Coxe had given orders to some hundreds of his people to repair to the woods by an appointed day to cut sandal-wood. The whole obeyed except one man, who had the folly and hardihood to refuse. Upon this, his house was set fire to, and burnt to the ground on the very day: still he refused to go. The next process was to seize his possessions, and turn his wife and family off the estate; which would inevitably have been done, if he had not allowed discretion to take the place of valour, and made a timely submission, to prevent this extremity. It has been before said that no compensation is made to the labourers for their work, except a small grant of land. This, however, does not prevent the chief, if kindly disposed, from distributing supplies of maros, tappers, cloth, &c., gratuitously among them. I have heard that Krimakoo once distributed no less than three thousand blankets among his people. The King exercises absolute dominion over the

sea as well as over the land; and in the same way lets out the right of fishery along the coast to his chiefs.

Ibid. p. 382.—At six o'clock we reached a small village about a mile from the sea-shore, and easily obtained a tolerable hut to pass the night in: it belonged to an English sailor, who had established himself here. He received us with great civility, and killed a pig for our supper, which, when baked, together with tarrow-root, furnished a very excellent repast.

Ibid. p. 383.—The English sailor informed me that all the land in his neighbourhood belonged to Krimakoo, the King's Minister, familiarly called Billy Pitt, who had given him sixty acres. On part of this he made a tarrow-plantation, which afforded the means of living; but the rest, he said, was useless. He seemed wretchedly poor; wore an old shirt and trowsers, more ragged and dirty than can be well conceived, and was so disfigured by a thick black beard of several weeks' growth, that he was really far more savage-looking than any of the islanders.

Without placing much dependence upon the statement of this poor fellow, I was still interested by what he told me, and pitied the abject condition of dependence upon savages, to which he was now reduced. Among other causes of complaint, he inveighed bitterly and with truth against the tyranny of the chiefs, who claim a right to possess all private property which is acquired upon their estates, and seize everything belonging to the poorer classes for which they feel an inclination. He said that whenever an industrious person brought more land into cultivation than was necessary for his subsistence, or reared a good breed of pigs and poultry, the chief, on hearing of it, had no hesitation in making the property his own. This takes place, independent of the customary presents and tribute; even every dollar obtained by traffic with strangers must be given up, on pain of the chief's displeasure. Europeans are subject to the same oppression: and from this

general insecurity of private property arises in a great degree the absence of much industry or improvement, both among them and the native peasantry.

Ibid. p. 412.—On the evening of the same day I bade adieu to Governor Coxe, as he was styled, and went to visit an American sailor, who had been established upwards of five years in this island, and cultivated a small farm belonging to that chief. His property consisted of a few acres of tarrow-plantations, in the midst of a fine orchard of bread-fruit and other trees, with pasturage for a large herd of goats; and these, in addition to some pigs and poultry, rendered him rich in the eyes of all his neighbours. His cottage was well built, and being furnished with matting, we passed the night very comfortably in it. He liked his situation altogether, and thought it very preferable to a seaman's life; but complained, nevertheless, of the insecure tenure by which property is held in this country. He told me, as others had done, that he was afraid of making any improvements, and putting more land into cultivation, lest his prosperity should excite the cupidity of the chief, who would not hesitate, if he chose it, to appropriate the whole to himself. As it was, he had to bear every sort of petty exaction, according to the caprices of the chief, on the instigations of his advisers, and only retained possession of his property by acceding to every demand, and propitiating, with continual presents, the favour of the great man.

Ibid. p. 427.—Menini was supposed to be worth thirty or forty thousand dollars, amassed during a residence of thirty years in the country: but he held his property by rather a feeble tenure, namely, the King's good will and pleasure; and might at any moment be deprived of it, without the possibility of obtaining redress.

II. Page 9.

Emigration Report of June, 1827, p. 397.—Are you

aware of the terms upon which land is now granted to settlers in the colony of New South Wales?—I understand there has been an alteration lately; that alteration I am not aware of.

The present system is, that a price is placed upon the land as wild land: for example, 200,000 acres would be valued at 18*d.* an acre, that would make the total grant of the value of 15,000*l.*; then, upon that 15,000*l.*, five per cent. would be charged at the end of seven years, redeemable at any time at a certain number of years' purchase; consequently, for such a grant as you contemplate, a rent of 750*l.* a year would be demanded, which rent would be redeemable at any time by payment of the capital of 15,000*l.*; at the same time, it is not the custom to make grants larger than 10,000 acres.

III. Page 20.

Travels from Vienna through Lower Hungary, by Richard Bright, M.D., p. 114.—But, if the landlord have reason to be little satisfied, still less can the peasant be supposed to rejoice in his situation. It can never be well to make the great and actually necessary part of society,—the labouring class,—dependent on the chances of a good or bad harvest for its existence. A man of capital can bear, for a year or two years, the failure of his crops; but let a cold east wind blow for one night,—let a hail storm descend,—or let a river overflow its banks,—and the peasant, who has nothing but his field, starves or becomes a burthen to his lord. Of this I have seen actual proof, not only in the wine districts of Hungary, in which the uncertainty of the crop is extreme, but in some of its richest plains, where I have known the peasantry, full three months before gathering in, humbly supplicating the landlords to advance them corn on the faith of the coming harvest. These are evils always liable to occur, supposing the peasant were allowed to cultivate his lands without

interruption. But is this the case? The lord can legally claim only one hundred and four days' labour from each in the year; yet who can restrain him if he demand more? There are a multiplicity of pretexts under which he can make such demands, and be supported in them. The administration of justice is, in a great degree, vested in his own hands. There are many little faults for which a peasant becomes liable to be punished with blows and fines, but which he is often permitted to commute for labour. In fact, these things happen so frequently, and other extorted days of labour, which the peasant fears to refuse, occur so often, that I remember, when in conversation with a very intelligent Director, I was estimating the labour of each peasant at one hundred and four days,—he immediately corrected me, and said I might double it. If, however, the lord, or his head servants, have too much feeling of propriety to transgress against the strictness of the law, they can at any time call upon the peasants to serve them for pay; and that, not at the usual wages of a servant, but about one-third as much, according to an assessed rate of labour. Add to all this the services due to the government,—remember, too, that cases occur in which a peasant is obliged to be six weeks from his home, with his horses and cart, carrying imperial stores to the frontier,—and then judge whether he is permitted to cultivate, without interruption, the land which he receives, as the only return for his labour.

IV. Page 30.

Burnet's *View of the Present State of Poland*, p. 85.—When a young peasant marries, his lord assigns him a certain quantity of land, sufficient for the maintenance of himself and family in the poor manner in which they are accustomed to live. Should the family be numerous, some little addition is made to the grant. At the same time the young couple obtain also a few cattle, as a cow or two,

with steers to plough their land. These are fed in the stubble, or in the open places of the woods, as the season admits. The master also provides them with a cottage, with implements of husbandry, in short, with all their little moveable property. In consideration of these grants, the peasant is obliged to make a return to the landholder of one half of his labour; that is, he works three days in the week for his lord, and three for himself. If any of his cattle die, they are replaced by the master; a circumstance which renders him negligent of his little herd, as the death or loss of some of them is a frequent occurrence. When a farmer rents a farm, the villages situated on it, with their inhabitants, are considered as included in the contract; and the farmer derives a right to the same proportion of the labour of the peasants for the cultivation of that farm, as by the condition of their tenure they are bound to yield the lord. If an estate be sold, the peasants are likewise transferred, of course, with the soil, to a new master, subject to the same conditions as before. The Polish boors, therefore, are still slaves; and relatively to their political existence, absolutely subject to the will of their lords, as in all the barbarism of the feudal times. They are not privileged to quit the soil, except in a few instances of complete enfranchisement; and if they were, the privilege, for the most part, would be merely nominal: for whither should they go? They may retire, indeed, into the recesses of the forest, where it is possible they may not be traced; and it is probable, that in times past many resorted to this expedient to escape from the cruelties of a tyrannical master. To fly from a mild master would be obviously against their interest. To quit the territory of one grandee for that of another, must commonly, if not always, have been impracticable: for what landholder would choose to admit a fugitive peasant, and thus encourage a spirit of revolt? Again, it is not in their power, from the circumstances of their condition, to sell their

labour indifferently to this or that master; and if such obstacles did not oppose, the very extent of the Polish farms, and the consequent want of a second contiguous employer, would suffice in most cases to preclude a change of masters.

It is said that a few of the peasants improve the little stock which is committed to their management, accumulating some small property; but their conduct is far more frequently marked by carelessness and a want of forecast. Instances, however, of this accumulation begin to multiply: for one effect of the partition has been that the peasants are less liable to be plundered. Generally speaking, it does not appear that this allowance of land and cattle either is, or designed to be, more than enough for their scanty maintenance. I was once on a short journey with a nobleman, when we stopped to bait at the farm-house of a village, which I have before mentioned as a common custom in Poland. The peasants got intelligence of the presence of their lord; and assembled in a body of twenty or thirty, to prefer a petition to him. I was never more struck with the appearance of these poor wretches, and the contrast of their condition with that of their master. I stood at a distance, and perceived that he did not yield to their supplication. When he had dismissed them, I had the curiosity to inquire the object of their petition; and he replied that they had begged for an increased allowance of land, on the plea that what they had was insufficient for their support. He added, "I did not grant it them, because their present allotment is the usual quantity; and as it has sufficed hitherto, so it will for the time to come. Besides (said he), if I give them more, I well know that it will not, in reality, better their circumstances."

Poland does not furnish a man of more humanity than the one who rejected this apparently reasonable petition; but it must be allowed that he had good reasons for what he did. Those degraded and wretched beings, instead of

hoarding the small surplus of their absolute necessities, are almost universally accustomed to expend it in that abominable spirit which they call *schnaps*. It is incredible what quantities of this pernicious liquor are drunk, both by the peasant men and women. I have been told that a woman will frequently drink a pint, and even more, at a sitting, and that too in no great length of time. I have myself often seen one of these poor women led home between two men, so intoxicated as to be unable to stand. There can be no question that the excessive use of this *whiskey* (were it not to libel whiskey thus to style it) ought to be enumerated among the chief proximate causes of the deficient population of Poland. It is indeed so considered by the Poles; and the Count Zamoyski has lately established a porter brewery in Galitzia, in the hope of checking eventually so hurtful a habit by the substitution of that wholesome beverage.

The first time I saw any of these withered creatures was at Dantzic. I was prepared, by printed accounts, to expect a sight of singular wretchedness; but I shrunk involuntarily from the contemplation of the reality; and my feelings could not be consoled by the instantaneous and inevitable reflection, that I was then in a region which contains millions of miserable beings of the description of those before me. Some involuntary exclamation of surprise mixed with compassion escaped me. A thoughtless and a feelingless person (which are about the same things) was standing by. "Oh, sir! (says he) you will find plenty of such people as these in Poland; and you may strike them and kick them, or do what you please with them, and they will never resist you; they dare not." Thus, this gentleman, by the manner in which he spoke, seemed to think it a sort of privilege that they had among them a set of beings on whom they may vent with impunity the exuberance of their spite, and gratify every fitful burst of capricious passion. Far be it from me to ascribe the feel-

ings of this man to the more cultivated and humanized Poles; but such incidental and thoughtless expressions betray but too sensibly the general state of feeling which exists in regard to these oppressed men.

Some few of the boors are found about every large mansion. They are employed by the domestics in the most dirty menial offices. These have never any beds (however mean) provided them; so that in the summer nights they sleep like dogs, in any hole or corner they can find, always without undressing. But the winter's cold drives them into the hall, where they commonly crouch close to the stoves which are stationed there. Here, too, several of the domestics spread their pallets, and take up their night's abode. Frequently, as I have retired to my room after supper, I have stumbled over a boor sleeping at the foot of the stairs—a curious and a melancholy spectacle! to see these poor creatures, in all their unmitigated wretchedness, lodging in the halls of palaces!

In giving orders or directions of any sort to these torpid beings, though the sentiment of the speaker be not disgraced by the slightest admixture of unkind feeling, it is customary to address them in a certain smart and striking manner; as if to stimulate their stupid senses into sufficient action to prompt the performance of the most ordinary offices. There is no circumstance more deplorable in slavery than that dead-palsy of the faculties, which bereaves its possessor even of the comfort of hope; or capacitates him only to hope that he may live without torment, and mope out his existence in joyless apathy! If to a contiguous person you give utterance to any compassionating remark, you are commonly answered with the most indifferent air imaginable, "It is very true; but they are used to it;" something in the same way, I have thought, as eels are used to skinning alive.

Ibid. p. 84.—Their diet is very scanty; they have rarely any animal food. Even at the inns, in the interior

of Poland, which are not situated in a pretty good town, scarcely anything is to be procured. Their best things are their milk and poor cheese, were they in sufficient abundance; but the principal article of their diet is their coarse rye-bread above mentioned, and which I have sometimes attempted in vain to swallow.

Ibid. p. 102.—Till the reign of Casimir the Great, about the middle of the fourteenth century, the Polish nobles exercised over their peasants the uncontrolled power of life and death. No magistrate, not even the King himself, had authority to punish or restrain barbarities which outraged humanity. If an act of brutal cruelty were committed by one grandee on the slave of another, he was then liable to be called to an account by the possessor, as the violator of his property, not as the perpetrator of crime. This barbarous power in the nobles over the condition and lives of the boors, even Casimir was forced to recognize in the year 1366. Yet Casimir had a soul which felt for their hard lot, and he earnestly endeavoured to mitigate its severity. The peasants, finding him their friend, would often go to him with complaints of the injuries they received. "What! (says he, with indignation on these occasions) have you neither stones nor bludgeons with which to defend yourselves?"

Casimir was the first who ventured to prescribe a fine for the murder of a peasant. And, as it had been the custom, on the death of a peasant, for the master to seize his trifling effects, he also enacted that on his decease his next heir should inherit; and that if his master should plunder him, or dishonour his wife or daughter, he should be permitted to remove whithersoever he pleased. He even decreed that a peasant should be privileged to bear arms as a soldier, and be considered as a freeman.

These humane regulations, however, were ill observed in the sequel; for of what avail are laws, if authority be wanting to enforce obedience? There is an ancient Polish maxim, "That no slave can carry on any process against

his master;" and hence the law regarding the inheritance of property was rendered nugatory. Nor could the fine for murder be often levied, by reason of the accumulation of evidence required for the conviction of a noble. Yet these were the only attempts to better the condition of the boors, till the year 1768, when a decree passed by which the murder of a peasant was rendered a capital crime. But even this enactment was a mere mockery of justice: for to prove the fact of murder, a concurrence of circumstances was made necessary, which could rarely have been found to co-exist. The murderer was not only to be taken in the fact! but that fact was required to be proved by the testimony of two gentlemen, or four peasants! These insignificant edicts, rendered inefficient by the power of custom, were not the only obstacles to the elevation of the peasantry to the rank of men. There existed, in the Polish laws, numerous and positive ordinances, as though expressly designed to perpetuate slavery. Among these, the most oppressive seems to have been that which empowered the nobles to erect summary tribunals, subject to no appeals, by which they inflicted whatever penalties they thought proper on delinquents, or those whom they chose to consider as delinquents. The penalties for elopement from their villages were peculiarly severe; which proves at once the grievousness of their oppression, and the existence of frequent attempts to escape.

Ibid. p. 110.—Whoever casts his eye but for a moment on the miserable boors of Poland, will instantly feel that ages must elapse before they can be raised to the rank of civilized beings. If met in the winter's snow, they appear like herds of savage beasts rather than companies of men; but with the melancholy difference of being totally destitute of that wild activity which characterises savage nature. Their coarse mantles; their shrunk and squalid forms; their dirty, matted hair; their dull, moping looks, and lifeless movements; all combine to form an image which

sickens humanity, and makes the heart recoil even from its own horrid sympathy!

Ibid. p. 105.—Some endeavours have been likewise made by individuals to abolish the slavery of the boors. In the year 1760 the Chancellor Zamoyski enfranchised six villages in the palatinate of Masovia. This experiment has been much vaunted by Mr. Coxe as having been attended with all the good effects desired; and he asserts that the Chancellor had, in consequence, enfranchised the peasants on all his estates. Both of these assertions are false. I inquired particularly of the son, the present Count Zamoyski, respecting those six villages, and was grieved to learn that the experiment had completely failed. The Count said that within a few years he had sold the estate, as it was situated in the Prussian division, with which he had now no concern. He added, I was also glad to get rid of it, from the trouble the peasants gave me. These degraded beings, on receiving their freedom, were overjoyed, it seems, at they knew not what. Having no distinct comprehension of what freedom meant, but merely a rude notion that they may now do what they liked, they ran into every species of excess and extravagance which their circumstances admitted. Drunkenness, instead of being occasional, became almost perpetual; riot and disorder usurped the place of quietness and industry; the necessary labour suspended, the lands were worse cultivated than before; and the small rents required of them they were often unable to pay. Yet what does all this prove? that slavery is better than freedom for a large portion of mankind? horrible inference! But it proves decisively, what has been often proved before, that we may be too precipitate in our plans of reform; and that misguided benevolence may frequently do mischief, while it seeks only to diffuse good.

In all instances of failure relative to the proposed benefit of human beings, the great danger is lest we should relax in our efforts, and conclude that to be impossible

which, in fact, our deficient wisdom only had prevented us from effecting.

Ibid. p. 109.—The present Count Zamoyski, son of the late Chancellor, in no wise disheartened by his father's miscarriage, continues to meditate extensive plans of improvement relative to his own peasantry. But he is now aware that he must proceed with caution, and not, by attempting too much, end in doing nothing. He designs to emancipate the whole of his vassals *gradually;* to give them slight privileges at first, and to encourage them with the hope of more, *on condition* of proper conduct. In short, his principle is to retain the power of reward and punishment completely in his own hands, that he may be able to stimulate to industry by the hope of new favours, and to restrain from misconduct by the threatened forfeiture of those already conceded; till their state, gradually ameliorated, shall render it safe to give them entire freedom, and to leave their conduct to be regulated by the general operation of the laws.

Ibid. p. 121.—The cultivation of the soil in Poland, in the manner it is there conducted, is attended with little trouble and expense; indeed, far less than it ought to be. We nowhere see more than a ploughman with his plough and a single pair of small bullocks, not bigger than English steers, to produce a fallow. There is scarcely such a thing as manure to be seen, and the produce is proportionally small.

Ibid. p. 124.—The territory of a nobleman, the extent of which I had an opportunity of ascertaining with some exactness, is about five thousand square miles; which produces an income of about 100,000 ducats, or £50,000 sterling: this gives only £50 a year for every twenty square miles.

V. Page 37.

State of the Poor from the Conquest to the Reformation,

by Sir F. M. Eden, Bart. Vol. I.—Of the domestic comforts enjoyed by the great body of the people, in the periods immediately subsequent to the Conquest, we may form a tolerable estimate, notwithstanding the great deficiency of evidence to mark the manners of private life, from considering the information afforded us by historians, concerning their political situation. If we except the baronial proprietors of land, and their vassals the free tenants and socmen, the rest of the nation, for a long time after this era, seems to have been involved in a state of servitude, which, though qualified as to its effects, was uniform in its principle, that none who had unhappily been born in, or had fallen into, bondage, could acquire an absolute right to any species of property.*

The condition, however, of the people, who were thus debarred from tasting the first of social blessings, was not, in other respects, equally abject and miserable: those denominated villeins in gross, were at the absolute disposal of their lord; and were transferable by deed, sale, or conveyance, from one owner to another. They were principally employed in menial services about the house, and were so numerous as to form a considerable branch of English commerce. An author, who lived in the reign of Henry the Second, informs us that such a number of them was exported to Ireland that the market there was absolutely glutted; and another declares that from the reign of King William the First to that of King John, there was scarcely a cottage in Scotland that did not possess an English slave. These were probably the captives taken

* Litt. § 177. This was also the case in Scotland: "Na bondman may buy or purches his libertie with his awin proper gudes or geir—because all the cattell and gudes of all bondmen are understand to be in the power and dominion of the maister: swa that without consent of his maister, he may not redeme himself out of bondage with his awin proper denires or money."—*See the Regiam Majestatem; or, the Auld Lawes of Scotland,* Buke II., Chap. 12.

in the predatory inroads on the borders: there can be little doubt but that the English retaliated on their neighbours, and made slaves of such of their Scotch prisoners as could not pay for their ransom. In the various accounts of the marauding expeditions of the moss-troopers of Cumberland, men are often mentioned as the principal part of the booty they brought back.

Villeins regardant were those who were annexed to manors, and bound to perform the most servile offices of agricultural labour, which was originally unlimited, both with regard to its quality and its duration. They, however, were sometimes permitted to occupy small portions of land to sustain themselves and their families, but were removable at the lord's pleasure, and were liable to be sold, with the soil to which they belonged; from which they might also at any time be severed. I have made this distinction between villeins in gross, andvilleins regardant, as it is laid down by our lawyers and historians. It may, however, I think, be doubted whether the difference in their condition was more than nominal. The villein regardant seems to have been occasionally employed as a domestic, as well as an agricultural slave: and, although he was generally indulged by his lord in the use of a few acres of land, he was liable to be called upon to perform every species of work, however painful or degrading. Other ranks of men, equally servile and dependent, are noticed in ancient records; particularly the Bordarii, who, in consideration of their being permitted to occupy a small cottage, were bound to provide poultry, eggs, and other articles of diet for the lord's table: and the Cottarii, or Coterelli, who appear to have been much on the same footing with villeins regardant, being employed in the trades of smith, carpenter, and other handicraft arts necessary in the country; in which they had been instructed at the expense of their masters, and for whose benefit they pursued their several occupations.

After the Conquest, various causes co-operated not only to prevent the introduction of a new stock, but also to extinguish the ancient race of villeins. As it was the custom of enslaving captives taken in war that was probably the foundation, and certainly the support, for many ages, of this not more iniquitous than impolitic system; so it seems that the disuse of the ancient practice of converting captivity into slavery led the way to its ultimate abolition: and, although history is silent on the subject, I should imagine that, after the introduction of the Norman line, no Englishman could be a slave, unless by birth or confession. These were the only sources of supply; but they continued, for a long time, sufficiently copious to involve the labouring classes of the community in a bondage that was marked by every essential ingredient of slavery.

Ibid. p. 13.—Between the Conquest and the reign of Edward the Third, there arose a middle class of men, who, although they did not immediately acquire the full power of bartering their labour to the best bidder, were yet not subjected to the imperious caprices of a master, and the unconditional services of personal bondage. Of this description were the servile tenants of manors, who, although they were permitted to occupy small portions of land for their own use, were required, at stated periods of the year, to attend to the cultivation of the demesnes of their lords. Previous to the reigns of Henry the Third, and Edward the First, they are not much noticed in ancient records; but in the period immediately subsequent, on every occasion, when it became important for the lord to inquire into the state of his manors and their appendages, the value of his arable and pasture land, the number of his parks, his fish-ponds, his mills, and his mansion-houses, were not more minutely investigated than the number and condition of his servile tenants, and the extent and nature of the services they were bound to perform. It was ex-

tremely essential for him to ascertain whether that part of his estate, which he retained in his own hands, could be cultivated without the intervention of free labourers; and hence we may see the necessity why a baron, on acquiring a fee, either by purchase or inheritance, and the king's escheators, on a forfeiture accruing to the crown, seldom failed to obtain full information relative to manorial rights, by means of an inquisition, composed, in the latter instance, of freeholders of the county, and in the former, most usually, of the principal tenants of the manor.

It is from the inquests thus taken that we can, perhaps, obtain the best possible evidence relative to the ancient state of agriculture in England. They often describe, very particularly, the quantity of arable, of pasture, and of meadow in a manor; the times at which the various operations of husbandry were carried on; the duty of agricultural servants; their diet; the customs in harvest; and many other particulars highly illustrative of the rural economy of ancient times. From such records, it appears that, before the reign of Edward the First, the condition of villeins was greatly meliorated; and that, instead of being obliged to perform every mean and servile office that the arbitrary will of the lord required, they had, at length, acquired a tenure in lands, on condition of rendering services, which were either certain in their nature—as to reap the lord's corn, or cleanse his fish-pond; or limited in their duration—as to harrow two days in the year, or to employ three days in carting the lord's timber.

A tenant by villenage thus circumstanced was no longer a villein. He was indeed bound to perform certain stipulated work for his lord, generally at sowing-time and harvest, the only seasons which, in the rude state of agriculture, were much attended to: but, at other times of the year, he was at liberty to exercise his industry for his own benefit. As early as the year 1257, a servile tenant, if employed before Midsummer, received wages: and in

Edward the First's reign, he was permitted, instead of working himself, to provide a labourer for the lord; from which it is obvious that he must have sometimes possessed the means of hiring one: and as it is not natural to suppose that a tenant by villenage had any power of hiring the pure villein (who, we have seen, was annexed either to the land, or the person of his lord), labourers, who were thus hired by servile cultivators, it is probable, were either tenants by villenage, who could assist their neighbours on the spare days, in which they were not bound to work for their lord; or free labourers, who existed (although perhaps not in great numbers) long before the parliamentary notice taken of them in the Statute of Labourers, passed in 1350.

Treatyse on Surveyinge (said to have been "*compyled sometyme by Master Fitzherbarde*," p. 49 of reprint).—Sir Anthony Fitzherbert lived in the reign of Henry the Eighth. This Treatise on Surveying is assigned to him on strong evidence, and clearly it was published in 1523, about his time; it shows that even then, barely more than 300 years ago, there were predial slaves in England in sufficient numbers to form a marked feature in the composition of the community.

Item inquirendum est de customariis videlicet quot sunt customarii et quantum terre quilibet customarius teneat, quas operationes, et quas consuetudines facit, et quantum valent opera et consuetudines cuiuslibet customarii per se annum, et quantum redditum de redditu, assise per annum preter opera et consuetudines, *et qui possunt talliari ad voluntatem domini et qui non.*

It is to be inquered of customary tenantes, that is to wytte, howe many there be, and how moch land every tenaunt holdeth, and what werkes and customs he doth, and what the werkes and customs be worth of every tenaunt by itself, and how moche rent by the yeare, above his werkes and customes he doth pay, and which of them

may taxe their landes at the wyll of the lorde and whiche nat. Customarye tenauntes are those that hold theyr landes of their lord by copye of courte role, *after the custome of the manour*. And there may be many tenauntes within the same manor *that have no copies*, and yet holde by lyke custome and *seruyce at the wyll of the lorde*. And in myne opinion it began soone after the Conquest, when William Conquerour had conquered the realme, he rewarded all those that came with hym, in his viage royall, according to their degree. And to honourable men he gave lordshyppes, maners, landes, and tenementes, with all the inhabytantes, men and women dwellyng in the same, to do with them at their pleasure.

And those honourable men thought that they must needes have servantes and tenantes, and theyr landes occupyed with tyllage. Wherefore they pardoned the inhabytantes of their lyues, and caused them to do al maner of servyce that was to be done, were it never so wyle, and caused them to occupie their landes and tenementes in tyllage, and toke of them suche rentes, customes and services, as it pleased them to have. And also took all their goodes and cattell at all tymis at their plesure, and called them their bondmen, and sythe that tyme many noblemen both spirituall and temporall, of their godly disposition, have made to divers of the said bondmen manumissions, and granted them freedom and libertie, and set to them their landes and tenementes to occupy after dyvers maner of rentes, customes and servyces, the whiche is used in dyuers places unto this day. Howe be it in some places, the boundmen contynue as yet, the which me semeth is the greatest inconuenience that now is suffered by the lawe, that is to haue any christen man bounden to an other, and to haue the rule of his body, landes and goodes that his wife, children, and seruantes haue laboured for all theyr lyfe tyme to be so taken, like as and it were extorcion or bribery. And many tymes by coulour thereof,

there be many freemen taken as bondmen, and their landes and goodes taken from them, so that they shall not be able to sue for remedy, to proue themselfe fre of blode. And that is moste commonly where the freemen have the same name as the bondemen, or that his auncesters, of whome he is comen, was manumysed before his byrthe. In such case there can nat be to great a punyshment. For as me semeth, there shulde be no man bounde but to God, and to his kynge, and prince ouer hym: Quia Deus non facit exceptionem personarum, for God maketh no exception of any person. Wherefore it were a charitable dede to euery nobleman, both spirituall and temporall, to do as they wolde be done by, and that is to manumyse them that be bond, and to make them fre of body and blode, reseruing to them theyr rentes, customes, and seruices of olde tyme due and accustomed, wherein they may get the prayers of the partie, and remyssion of theyr offences, as in the gospell. Eadem mesura, qua metiti, fueritis, metietur vobis.

The Latin words which head this extract are part of a statute of Edward the First; but Fitzherbert, or the author, be he who he may, does not mention in his comment that any part of it relates to *obsolete* usages or laws. Do not therefore the words *et qui possunt talliari ad voluntatem domini et qui non* indicate that this class of tenantry were tallaged or taxed by those in whose estate they lived, till their race became extinct?

VI. Pages 71 and 72.

Müller treats the Periœci as tributary communities, as a sort of inferior allies, and denies that their condition ever approached that of individual personal dependence: their condition, he says, "never had *the slightest resemblance* to that of bondage" (see *Tuffnell* and *Lewis*, p. 30). It strikes me, as it seems to have done Göttling (see his Aristotle, p. 465), that if this is meant to apply to the

Grecian Perioeci generally, it is going rather too far. The Perioeci appear to have been every where natives reduced by foreign invaders to a state of subjection less servile in some districts than in others, but *very like* bondage in many. Aristotle must have seen them in such a state when he intimates that they may very well occupy the place of the δουλοι he prefers as cultivators. See note to page 73 of text. See too *Göttling's Aristotle*, p. 473—"Urbs quævis autem Cretensium suos habebat Perioecos indigenas quidem sed bello victos, qui agrum ceteris colebant: nec tamen armis iis uti licuit nec gymnasiis. Id ex institutione Minois supererat, ut auctor est Aristoteles."

Göttling, on the other hand, is of opinion that this class of people, neither slaves nor freemen, but invested with something of an intermediate character, existed in the Dorian states alone; and he says distinctly that they were not to be found among the Ionians (see *Arist. Pol.* by Göttling, p. 464)—"Fundata erat autem hæc Dorica constitutio duabus maxime rebus: diverso moderatæ multitudinis jure et magistratuum descripta dignitate. *Nam quum civitates Ionicæ originis nonnisi liberos novissent et servos qui civitatem constituerent*, apud Dorienses medium quoddam genus inter liberos (Spartanos) et servos (Helotes) reperiebatur, Perioecorum nomine insignitum." Surely this is a mistake, and one which would lead to considerable misapprehension as to the mode in which the early communities of Greece, Ionian as well as Dorian, were originally constituted. Wherever a conquest took place, there a class was established under some name or other, consisting of the conquered natives, and ranking neither as citizens nor slaves. Such a class existed, as we have seen, among the Ionian inhabitants of Attica. The fact seems to be that, although this order in the state may be traced almost every where in Greece, still it was in the Dorian states alone that its presence and functions were necessary to support the very peculiar institutions established by the conquerors.

Elsewhere it might disappear or be transformed, as in Attica, without the event's affecting the constitution of the state.

VII.

Travels in France, by Arthur Young, Esq., vol. ii. p. 151.—The predominant feature in the farms of Piedmont is *metayers*, nearly upon the same system which I have described and condemned, in treating of the husbandry of France. The landlord commonly pays the taxes and repairs the buildings, and the tenant provides cattle, implements, and seed; they divide the produce. Wherever this system prevails, it may be taken for granted that a useless and miserable population is found. The poverty of the farmers is the origin of it; they cannot stock the farms, pay taxes, and rent in money, and, therefore, must divide the produce in order to divide the burthen. There is reason to believe that this was entirely the system in every part of Europe; it is gradually going out every where; and in Piedmont is giving way to great farms, whose occupiers pay a money rent. I was for some time deceived in going from Nice to Turin, and believed that more of the farms were larger than is really the case, which resulted from many small ones being collected into one homestead. That belonging to the Prince of Carignan, at Bilia Bruna, has the appearance of being very considerable; but, on inquiry, I found it in the hands of seven families of metayers. In the mountains, from Nice to Racconis, however, they are small; but many properties, as in the mountains of France and Spain.

The Caval. de Capra, member of the Agrarian Society, assured me that the union of farms was the ruin of Piedmont, and the effect of luxury; that the metayers were dismissed and driven away, and the fields every where depopulated. I demanded how the country came to have the appearance of immense cultivation, and looked rather

like a garden than a farm, all the way from Coni? He replied, that I should see things otherwise in passing to Milan: that the rice culture was supported by great farms, and that large tracts of country were reduced to a desert. Are they then uncultivated? No; they are very well cultivated; but the people all gone, or become miserable. We hear the same story in every country that is improving: while the produce is eaten up by a superfluity of idle hands, there is population on the spot; but it is useless population: the improvement banishes these drones to towns, where they become useful in trade and manufactures, and yield a market to that land to which they were before only a burthen. No country can be really flourishing unless this take place; nor can there be any where a flourishing and wealthy race of farmers, able to give money rents, but by the destruction of metaying. Does any one imagine that England would be more rich and more populous if her farmers were turned into metayers? Ridiculous! The intendant of Bissatti added another argument against great farms; namely, that of their being laid to grass more than small ones: surely this is a leading circumstance in their favour; for grass is the last and greatest improvement of Piedmont; and that arrangement of the soil which occasions most to be in grass, is the most beneficial. Their meadows are amongst the finest and most productive in the world. What is their arable? It yields crops of five or six times the seed only. To change such arable to such grass is, doubtless, the highest degree of improvement. View France and her metayers—view England and her farmers; and then draw your conclusions.

Wherever the country (that I saw) is poor and unwatered, in the Milanese, it is in the hands of metayers. At Mozzata the Count de Castiglioni showed me the rent book his *intendant* (steward) keeps, and it is a curious explanation of the system which prevails. In some hundred pages I saw

very few names without a large balance of debt due to him, and brought from the book of the preceding year: they pay by so many moggii of all the different grains, at the price of the year: so many heads of poultry; so much labour; so much hay; and so much straw, &c. But there is, in most of their accounts, on the debtor's side, a variety of articles, beside those of regular rent: so much corn, of all sorts, borrowed of the landlord, for seed or food, when the poor man has none: the same thing is common in France, wherever metaying takes place. All this proves the extreme poverty, and even misery, of these little farmers; and shows, that their condition is more wretched than that of a day labourer. They are much too numerous; three being calculated to live on one hundred pertichi, and all fully employed by labouring, and cropping the land incessantly with the spade, for a produce unequal to the payment of anything to the landlord, after feeding themselves and their cattle as they ought to be fed; hence the universal distress of the country.

Ibid. p. 155.—Estates in Bologna are very generally let to middle-men, who re-let them to the farmers at half produce, by which means the proprietor receives little more than one half of what he might do on a better system, with a peasantry in a better situation. The whole country is at half produce; the farmer supplies implements, cattle, and sheep, and half the seed; the proprietor repairs.

Ibid. pp. 155-56.—Letting lands, at money rent, is but new in Tuscany; and it is strange to say that Sig. Paoletti, a very practical writer, declares against it. A farm in Tuscany is called a *podere;* and such a number of them as are placed under the management of a factor is called *fattoria.* His business is to see that the lands are managed according to the lease, and that the landlord has his fair half. These farms are not often larger than for a pair of oxen, and eight to twelve people in one house; some 100 pertichi (this measure is to the acre, as about 25 to 38),

and two pair of oxen, with twenty people. I was assured that these metayers are (especially near Florence) much at their ease; that on holidays they are dressed remarkably well, and not without objects of luxury, as silver, gold, and silk; and live well, on plenty of bread, wine, and legumes. In some instances this may possibly be the case, but the general fact is contrary. It is absurd to think that metayers, upon such a farm as is cultivated by a pair of oxen, can be at their ease; and a clear proof of their poverty is this,—that the landlord, who provides half the live stock, is often obliged to lend the peasant money to enable him to procure his half; but they hire farms with very little money, which is the old story of France, &c.; and indeed poverty and miserable agriculture are the sure attendants upon this way of letting land. The metayers, not in the vicinity of the city, are so poor, that landlords even lend them corn to eat: their food is black bread, made of a mixture with vetches; and their drink is very little wine, mixed with water, and called *aquarolle;* meat on Sundays only; their dress very ordinary.

Ibid. p. 157.—In the mountains of Modena there are many peasant proprietors, but not in the plain. A great evil here, as in other parts of Lombardy, is the practice of the great lords and the possessors of lands in mortmain letting to middle-men, who re-let to metayers; under which tenure are all the lands of the duchy.

Ibid. p. 158.—Appearances from Reggio to Parma are much inferior to those from Modena to Reggio; the fences not so neat; nor the houses so well built, white, or clean. All here metayers; the proprietor supplies the cattle, half the seed, and pays the taxes; the peasant provides the utensils. In the whole duchies of Parma and Piacenza, and indeed almost everywhere else, the farms must be very small; the practices I have elsewhere noted, of the digging the land for beans, and working it up with a superfluity of labour, evidently show it: the swarms of people in all the

markets announce the same fact; at Piacenza I saw men whose only business was to bring a small bag of apples, about a peck; one man brought a turkey, and not a fine one. What a waste of time and labour for a stout fellow to be thus employed!

Travels in Switzerland, by W. Coxe, vol. iii. p. 145.—Another cause of their wretchedness proceeds from the present state of property. Few of the peasants are landholders; as from the continual oppression under which the people have groaned for above these two last centuries, the freeholds have gradually fallen into the hands of the nobles and Grisons, the latter of whom are supposed to possess half the estates in the Valteline. The tenants who take farms do not pay their rent in money, but in kind; a strong proof of general poverty. The peasant is at all the cost of cultivation, and delivers near half the produce to the landholder. The remaining portion would ill compensate his labour and expense, if he was not in some measure befriended by the fertility of the soil. The ground seldom lies fallow, and the richest parts of the valley produce two crops. The first crop is wheat, rye, or spelt, half of which is delivered to the proprietor; the second crop is generally millet, buck-wheat, maaze, or Turkey corn, which is the principal nourishment of the common people: the chief part of this crop belongs to the peasant, and enables him in a plentiful year to support his family with some degree of comfort. The peasants who inhabit the districts which yield wine are the most wretched: for the trouble and charge of rearing the vines, of gathering and pressing the grapes, is very considerable; and they are so very apt to consume the share of liquor allotted to them in intoxication, that, were it not for the grain intermixed with the vines, they and their families would be left almost entirely destitute of subsistence.

Besides the business of agriculture, some of the peasants attend to the cultivation of silk. For this purpose they

receive the eggs from the landholder, rear the silk-worms, and are entitled to half the silk. This employment is not unprofitable; for although the rearing of the silk-worms is attended with much trouble, and requires great caution, yet, as the occupation is generally entrusted to the women, it does not take the men from their work.

With all the advantages, however, derived from the fertility of the soil, and the variety of its productions, the peasants cannot, without the utmost difficulty, and a constant exertion, maintain their families; and they are always reduced to the greatest distress, whenever the season is unfavourable to agriculture.

To the causes of penury among the lower classes above enumerated, may be added the natural indolence of the people, and their tendency to superstition, which takes them from their labour. Upon the whole, I have not, in the course of my travels, seen any peasantry, except in Poland, so comfortless as the inferior inhabitants of this valley. They enjoy indeed one great advantage over the Poles, in not being the absolute property of the landholder, and transferable, like cattle. They are therefore at liberty to live where they choose, to quit their country, and seek a better condition in other regions; a relief to which distress often compels them to have recourse.

Ibid. p. 143.—The cottages of the peasants, which are built of stone, are large, but gloomy, generally without glass windows: I entered several, and was every where disgusted with an uniform appearance of dirt and poverty. The peasants are mostly covered with rags, and the children have usually an unhealthy look, which arises from their wretched manner of living. Such a scarcity of provisions has been occasioned by last year's drought, that the poor inhabitants have been reduced to the most extreme necessity. The price of bread was unavoidably raised so high that in many parts the peasants could not purchase it; and their only food was for some time a kind of paste, made

by pounding the hulls and stones of the grapes which had been pressed for wine, and mixing it with a little meal. Famine, added to their oppressed situation, reduced the inhabitants to the lowest condition of human misery, and numbers perished from absolute want.

Gilly's Narrative and Researches among the Vaudois, &c., p. 129.—The other cottages we entered were of a very inferior order, and had but few of those little comforts with which in England we desire to see the poorest supplied, and it was quite astonishing to compare the very rude and insufficient accommodations of these people, with their civility and information. In their mode of living, or, I might almost say, herding together, under a roof, which is barely weather-proof, they are far behind our own peasantry, but in mental advancement they are just as far beyond them. Most of them have a few roods of land, which they can call their own property, varying in extent from about a quarter of an acre and upwards, and they have the means of providing themselves with fuel, from the abundance of wood upon the mountains.

The tenure upon which land is hired requires that the occupier should pay to the proprietor half the produce of corn and wine in kind, and half the *value* of the hay. The indifferent corn-land yields about five fold, and the best twelve fold. They seldom suffer the ground to lie fallow, and the most general course is, wheat for two years, and maize the third. The land is well manured from time to time, and the corn is usually sown in August or September, and cut in June. In the vale of San Giovanni, and in a few other productive spots, hay is cut three times in the year.

Ibid. p. 128.—On a crate suspended from the ceiling, we counted fourteen large *black* loaves. *Bread is an unusual luxury among them*, but the owner of this cottage was of a condition something above the generality.

VIII.

Note on Ryot Rents.

Col. Tod's services in Rajast'han were most distinguished. His elaborate work is a valuable contribution to the literature of his country. Had I found that the *facts* collected by such a person really contradicted the opinions I have arrived at (in common, however, with the majority of those who have considered the subject), I should have been most ready to have re-examined those opinions, and perhaps to have abandoned them. But the *conclusions* which Col. Tod has drawn from his facts seem to me to require considerable modification before they can be reconciled with the past and present condition of the rest of India, or indeed of Rajast'han itself as he depicts it. The Colonel thinks that the relations between the princes of Rajast'han and their nobles are similar to those which existed between the feudal nobility of Europe and their sovereigns; and that the ryots have an interest in the soil, which he calls a *freehold* interest: and this he magnifies and dwells on, with all the partiality of a man who feels a good-natured pleasure in exalting the institutions of his favorite Rajpoots.

The question to be discussed is, whether there is any thing in *the facts* produced by Col. Tod or others, to contradict the notion adopted in the text, that the soil of India belongs to the sovereign and to the sovereign alone, and that the occupiers have never, *practically*, any other character than that of his tenantry, except in some small districts, which form acknowledged exceptions to a general rule. The mere existence of a feudal nobility, so far from being inconsistent with the proprietary right of the sovereign, strongly confirms it. It is the one essential characteristic of a *feudal* system, that the land should be granted by the sovereign, and on certain conditions. In Europe the right of *resumption* slid out of the hands of the

monarchs by imperceptible degrees. In Rajast'han it has never escaped them at all. Only a century and a half ago, so miserably unstable was the claim of subject nobles even to the temporary possession of any particular spot that they were in the habit of changing their lands every three years. "So late as the reign of Mana Singram (ten generations ago), the fiefs of Mewar were actually moveable, and little more than a century and a half has passed since this practice ceased. Thus a Rahtore would shift with family, chattels, and *retainers*, from the north into the wilds of Chuppun, while the Suktawut, relieved, would occupy the plains at the foot of the Aravulli, or a Chondawut would exchange his abode on the banks of the Chumbul with a Pramara or Chohan from the Table Mountain, the eastern boundary of Mewar. "Such changes" (Mr. Tod says in a note) "were triennial, and, as I have heard the Prince himself say, so interwoven with their customs was this rule that it caused no dissatisfaction: but of this we may be allowed at least to doubt. It was a perfect check to the imbibing of local attachment; and the prohibition against erecting forts for refuge or defiance prevented its growth if acquired. It produced the *object intended*, *obedience* to the Prince, and unity against the restless Mogul."—Tod's *Rajast'han*, p. 164.

Even now their *rights* remain much on the same footing. In Europe the necessity of admission by the sovereign, the fine paid by the heir, and the renewal of homage and fealty, kept alive the recollection, at least, of the *past* rights of the sovereign. In Rajast'han an *actual resumption* takes place by the Rajah on the death of every chief: and is conducted in such a manner as very impressively to exhibit the *existing* claims of the monarch, and the entire (*legal*) dependence of all derivative interests on his will. "On the demise of a chief, the prince immediately sends a party, termed the *zubti* (sequestrator), consisting of a civil officer and a few soldiers, who take possession of the state (quere, estate) in

the prince's name. The heir sends his prayer to court to be installed in the property, offering the proper relief. This paid, the chief is invited to repair to the presence, when he performs homage, and makes protestations of service and fealty; he receives a fresh grant, and the inauguration terminates by the prince girding him with a sword, in the old forms of chivalry. It is an imposing ceremony, performed in a full assembly of the court, and one of the few which has never been relinquished. The fine paid, and the brand buckled to his side, a steed, turban, plume, and dress of honour given to the chief, the investiture is complete; the sequestrator returns to court, and the chief to his estate, to receive the vows and congratulations of his vassals."—Tod's *Rajast'han*, p. 158. After these extracts, it can hardly be necessary to state, that the doctrine as to the proprietary rights of the sovereign is not weakened by the condition of the noble Rajpoots. It would be a curious subject, were this the place for it, to trace the peculiar causes which have led the sovereigns of Rajast'han to delegate, in a great measure, the military defence of their frontiers to chieftains so nearly resembling our feudal barons. Those causes may be partially discerned in the ties of blood which connect the sovereign and chiefs with their tribes—in the mountainous character of their fortresses—in their being constantly liable to hostile incursions—and in their almost perpetual state of defensive war. We should, I think, after fairly examining the causes and results of the Rajpoot system, find much more reason to wonder that the rights of the sovereign to the soil have not oftener generated such a system, than to conclude from its existence in Rajast'han that there are no such proprietary rights.

I cannot quit the feudal part of the question without warmly recommending Col. Tod's book to the general reader, and to the student of history, and of man. The system of *modified* dependence on the chief for *military*

services, as established in this part of India, has produced a resemblance to the state of Europe at a certain period of the progress of feuds, which is most striking, interesting, and instructive. That resemblance may be traced in the tenures and laws of the Rajpoots—in the mixed political results of these—both good and evil—and in the moral, and we may almost say poetical, characteristics of the population—in the deep and enthusiastic feeling which accompany their notions of fealty—in the emulous courage, the desperate fidelity of the nobles—and in many lofty and romantic traits of manners worthy to have sprung out of the very bosom of chivalry, and extending their influence to the dark beauties of the Zenana, as well as to their warrior kindred. High-born dames in distress, still there, as they once did in Europe, send their tokens to selected champions, who, whether invested with sovereign power, or occupying a less distinguished station, are equally bound to speed to their aid, under the penalty of being stigmatized for ever as cravens and dishonoured. Col. Tod himself can boast an honour (well deserved by zealous devotion and disinterested services) which many a preux chevalier would have joyfully dared a thousand deaths to obtain,—that of being the chosen friend and champion of more than one princess, whose regal, and indeed celestial, descents make the longest genealogies of Europe look mean.

The next question arising out of Col. Tod's book is this. Are the ryots in Rajast'han *practically*, as he conceives them to be, *freeholders* in any sense in which an English proprietor is called *the freeholder* of the land he owns? I began in the text by remarking, that the ryot has very generally a recognized right to the hereditary *occupation* of his plot of ground, while he pays the rent demanded of him: and the question is, whether that right in Rajast'han practically amounts to a *proprietary* right or not. Now a distinction, before suggested in the text, seems to afford

the only real criterion which can enable us to determine this question fairly. Is the ryot at rack-rent? has he, or has he not, a *beneficial* interest in the soil? can he obtain money for that interest by sale? can he make a landlord's rent of it? To give a cultivator an hereditary interest at a variable rack-rent, and then to call his right to till a freehold right, would clearly be little better than mockery. To subject such a person to the payment of *more* than a rack-rent, to leave him no adequate remuneration for his personal toil, and still to call him a freehold proprietor, would be something more bitter than mere mockery. To establish by law, and enforce cruelly in practice, fines and punishments to avenge his running away from his freehold, and refusing to cultivate it for the benefit of his hard task-master, would be to convert him into a predial slave: and this, although a very natural consequence of the mode of establishing such *freehold* rights, would make the names of proprietor and owner almost ridiculous.

The use of the criterion here pointed out is made very palpable by Sir T. Munro in a "Minute on the State of the Country and on the Condition of the People," dated the 31st of December, 1824. "Had the public assessment, as pretended, ever been, as in the books of their sages, only a sixth or a fifth, or even only a fourth of the gross produce, the payment of a fixed share in kind, and all the expensive machinery requisite for its supervision, never could have been wanted. The simple plan of a money assessment might have been at once resorted to, in the full confidence that the revenue would every year, in good or bad seasons, be easily and punctually paid. No person who knows anything of India revenue can believe that the Rayet, if his fixed assessment were only a fifth or a fourth of the gross produce, would not every year, whether the season were good or bad, pay it without difficulty; and not only do this, but prosper under it beyond what he has ever done at any former period. Had such a moderate assessment ever

been established, it would undoubtedly have been paid in money, because there would have been no reason for continuing the expensive process of making collections in kind. It was because the assessment was not moderate, that assessments in kind were introduced or continued: for a money rent equivalent to the amount could not have been realized one year with another. *The Hindoo Governments seem to have often wished that land should be both an hereditary and a saleable property; but they could not bring themselves to adopt the only practicable mode of effecting it, a low assessment.*"—*Life of Munro*, vol. iii. p. 331.

Ibid. p. 336.—"Rayets sometimes have a landlord's rent; for it is evident that whenever they so far improve their land as to derive from it more than the ordinary profit of stock, the excess is landlord's rent; but they are never sure of long enjoying this advantage, as they are constantly liable to be deprived of it by injudicious over assessment. While this state of insecurity exists, no body of substantial landholders can ever arise; nor can the country improve, or the revenue rest on any solid foundation. In order to make the land generally saleable, to encourage the Rayets to improve it, and to regard it as a permanent hereditary property, the assessment must be fixed, and more moderate in general than it now is; and, above all, so clearly defined as not to be liable to increase from ignorance or caprice."

Ibid. p. 339.—"The land of the Baramahl will probably in time all become saleable, even under its present assessment; but private landed property is of slow growth in countries where it has not previously existed, and where the Government revenue is nearly half the produce; and we must not expect that it can be hastened by regulations or forms of settlement, or by any other way than by adhering steadily to a limited assessment, and lowering it wherever, after full experience, it may still in particular places be found too high. By pursuing this course, or,

in other words, by following what is now called the Rayetwar system, we shall see no sudden change or improvement. *The progress of landed property will be slow*, but we may look with confidence to its ultimate and general establishment."

Ibid. p. 344.—"If we wish to make the lands of the Rayets yield them a landlord's rent, we have only to lower and fix the assessment; all then in time have the great body of the Rayets possessing landed properties, yielding a landlord's rent, but small in extent."

Ibid. p. 352.—"It may be said that Government having set a limit upon its demand upon the Zemindar, he will also set a limit to his demand upon the Rayet, and leave him the full produce of every improvement, and thus enable him to render his land a valuable property. But we have no reason to suppose that this will be the case, either from the practice of the new Zemindars during the twenty years they have existed, or from that of the old Zemindars during a succession of generations. In old Zemindarries, whether held by the Rajahs of the Circars, or the Poligars of the more southern provinces, which have from a distant period been held at a low and fixed peshcush, no indulgence has been shown to the Rayets, no bound has been set to the demand upon them. The demand has risen with improvement, according to the custom of the country, and the land of the Rayet has no saleable value; we ought not, therefore, to be surprised that in the new Zemindarries, whose assessment is so much higher, the result has been equally unfavourable to the Rayets. The new Zemindarries will, by division among heirs and failures in their payments, break up into portions of one or two villages; but this will not better the condition of the Rayet. It will not fix the rent of the land, nor render it a valuable property; it will merely convert one large Zemindarry into several small Zemindarries or Mootahs, and Mootahs of a kind much more injurious than those

of the Baramahl to the Rayets; because, in the Baramahl, the assessment of the Rayets' land had previously been fixed by survey, while in the new Zemindarries of the Circars it had been left undefined. The little will in time share the fate of the great Zemindarries; they will be divided, and fail, and finally revert to Government; and the Rayets, after this long and circuitous course, will again become what they originally were, the immediate tenants of Government; and Government will then have it in its power to survey their lands, *to lower and fix the assessment upon them, and to lay the foundation of landed property in the lands of the Rayets*, where alone, in order to be successful, it must be laid."

Yet, with all these views of the difficulty of establishing private property in land, Sir Thomas Munro declares the ryot to be the true proprietor, *possessing all that is not claimed by the sovereign as revenue.* This, he says, while rejecting the proprietary claims of the Zemindars; which he thinks unduly magnified. "But the Rayet is the real proprietor, for whatever land does not belong to the sovereign belongs to him. The demand for public revenue, according as it is high or low in different places, and at different times, affects his share; but whether it leaves him only the bare profit of his stock, or a small surplus beyond it as landlord's rent, he is still the true proprietor, and possesses all that is not claimed by the sovereign as revenue."—vol. iii. p. 340. I must refer the reader to the Minute itself for Sir T. Munro's account of the beneficial proprietary rights actually subsisting in Canara, and of certain similar but subordinate and imperfect rights existing elsewhere. To comprehend the real condition of southern India, it would be necessary to understand these well. The plan of such a work as this will not allow me to dilate on them.

Taking, then, the fact here established by Sir T. Munro, that, in spite of the hereditary claims of the ryot, it is ex-

tremely difficult to discern, or even establish, a real beneficial landlord's interest among the cultivators, while the assessment is high and variable, let us apply this to Rajast'han, and to the statements of Col. Tod as to the Ryot *freeholders* of Mewar. Let us examine, first, the relation between the subordinate chiefs and their immediate vassals. The chiefs, it will be remembered, represent the sovereign on their estates. The vassals of Deogurh sent to the British resident a long complaint of their chief, to which Col. Tod often refers. The following are some articles:—"To each Rajpoot's house a churras, or hide of land was attached; this he has *resumed*." "Ten or twelve villages established by his Puttaets he has *resumed*, and left their families to starve." While complaining of being driven from their land, it will be observed that the proceeding is called by themselves a *resumption*. "When Deogurh was established, at the same time were our allotments: *as his patrimony, so our patrimony*: our rights and privileges in his family are the same as his in the family of the presence (the sovereign)."—Tod, p. 199.

Now if these last passages express, as I suspect they do, the extent and ground of their claims, we know how to interpret them. If their interest in the soil was similar to that of the chief in his estate, it was a grant from the sovereign on certain conditions; resumable at pleasure, although practically rarely resumed.

Let us next examine the more direct relation between the sovereign and the cultivators on his domain. The following decree is headed *Privileges and immunities granted to the Printers of Calico and Inhabitants of the Town of Great Akola in Mewar.* "Maharana Bheem Sing commanding. Whereas the village has been abandoned, from the assignments levied by the garrison of Mandelgurh, and it being demanded of its population, how it could again be rendered prosperous; they unanimously replied, 'not to exact beyond the dues and contributions

established of yore; to erect the pillar *promising* never to exact above half the produce of the crops, or to molest the persons of those who thus paid their dues.' "—Tod, p. 206.

I leave the reader to determine if this is the language of a ruler dealing with a body of acknowledged *freeholders*, or of an Indian owner of ryot land, promising to *moderate* his demands for the future.

But the most curious specimen of the actual condition of the ryots of Rajast'han is to be found in the account of the management of Zalim Singh, the Regent of Kotah. This chief was the real sovereign of Kotah; though administering its affairs in the name of a rajah fainéan. His administration was considered singularly prudent and vigorous; he is called by Col. Tod the Nestor of India, and is spoken of by Sir John Malcolm much in the same spirit. The following is an extract from Sir John's 'Central India:'—"One of the principal of the Rajpoot rulers of Central India, Zalim Singh, has a revenue system, which, like that of his government, is entirely suited to his personal character. He manages a kingdom like a farm: he is the banker who makes the advances to the cultivators, as well as the ruler to whom they pay revenue: and his terms of interest are as high as those of the most sordid money-brokers. This places the cultivators much in his power, and to increase this dependence *he has belonging to himself several thousand ploughs*, with hired labourers, who are not only employed in recovering waste lands, *but sent on the instant to till those fields which the peasantry object to cultivate, from deeming the rent too high.*"—Malcolm's *Central India*, vol. ii., p. 62.

Truly, after reading these extracts, it is difficult to believe that the cultivators of Rajast'han are in a much more elevated condition than those of southern India; among whom Sir Thomas Munro perceived that it would be a very slow and difficult process to establish landed pro-

perty and beneficial interests; although he recognised in them the proprietors of all not claimed by the sovereign as revenue.

But there is a position of Col. Tod's which yet remains to be noticed.—He cites the institutes of Menu to prove that land throughout India belongs to him *who first clears the wood and tills it:* and this quotation derives rather more importance than would otherwise belong to it from the fact that the passage relating to the sovereign's right to the soil, which is quoted in the text from Colebrooke's translation of the digest of Hindoo law, has been suspected of having been forged by the natives employed to compile that digest, in order to flatter some supposed prepossessions of those who employed them. I, however, still believe that the law, as translated by Mr. Colebrooke, whether genuine or not, very accurately represents the *practical management* of the soil of India for many ages.

He (says Col. Tod, speaking of the ryot) has nature and Menu in support of his claim, and can quote the text, alike *compulsory* on prince and peasant. "Cultivated land is the property of him who cut away the wood, or *who cleared and tilled it.*" The following is the text as it stands in Haughton's edition of Menu:—

On Judicature and Law, Private and Criminal, and on the Commercial and Servile Classes.—Haughton, p. 293.

44. Sages who know former times consider this earth (Prit'hivi) as the wife of King Prithu; and *thus* they pronounce cultivated land to be the property of him who cut away the wood, *or who cleared and tilled it;* and the antelope, of the first hunter who mortally wounded it.

Now, had this passage been found in a part of the code relating to landed property, it would at least have carried with it the authority of Menu. In that case I should have had to recall to the reader's recollection the small value which Sir T. Munro's experience led him to attach to the sayings of the ancient Indian sages, when questions arise

as to the actual law or past practice of India [see back, p. 343]. But, in truth, the passage is found in a very different part of the code; a slight further examination will convince the reader that this mythological sage was speaking of far other matters: and that Col. Tod has fallen into a mistake, at which we must be allowed to smile.

Menu is in fact deciding to whom the children shall belong, born of an adulterous intercourse between a married woman and her paramour. "Learn now that excellent law universally salutary, which was declared, concerning issue, by great and good sages formerly born," and illustrating this in his own allegorical fashion, he compares the *earth* to the lady; and declares, that he who received her virgin charms should be the owner of all the progeny she might produce, under any circumstances, however strong, of detected or permitted faithlessness; and that as cultivated ground belonged to him who first tilled it, and the antelope to the first hunter who mortally wounded it, so "men who have no marital property in women, but sow in the fields owned by others, may raise up fruit to the husband, but the procreator can have no advantage from it."

This subject Menu pursues from 31 p. 291 to 55 p. 295 of Haughton; and follows up his illustration by putting a variety of cases, which I certainly shall not quote, but which, once read, will effectually (I should think) prevent any person's again referring to this passage as a grave authority for the laws relating to landed property in India.

When deliberately speaking of the rights of the sovereign, the code uses a language in complete unison with the actual usages of the country. "If land be injured by the fault of the *farmer* himself, as if he fails to sow it in due time, he shall be fined ten times as much as the king's share of the crop that might otherwise have been raised:

but only five times as much if it was the fault of his servants without his knowledge."—*On Judicature and Law*, 243, p. 259 of Haughton's Translation.

The same imperfect right, however, to hereditary occupation, while the demands of the sovereign are satisfied, which is everywhere conceded to the ryots, is also still conceded in some parts of India (not in all) to the first reclaimer of waste or deserted ground.

Extracts from a firmaun of the Emperor Aurenzebe, A.D. 1668, published by Mr. Patton in his *Principles of Asiatic Monarchies*. The firmaun consists of instructions to the government collectors.

P. 343.—"In a place where neither asher nor kheraj (mowezzeff) are yet settled upon agriculture, they shall act as directed in the law. In case of kheraj (mowezzeff), they shall settle for such a rate that the ryots may not be ruined by the lands; and they shall not, on any account, exact beyond (the value of) half of the produce, notwithstanding any (particular) ability to pay more. In a place where (one or the other) is fixed, they shall take what has been agreed for, provided that in kheraj (mowezzeff) it does not exceed the half (of the produce in money), that the ryots may not be ruined: but if (what is settled appear to be too much) they shall reduce the former kheraj to what shall be found proportionable to their ability; however, if the capacity exceeds the settlement, they shall not take more."

P. 340.—"They must show the ryots every kind of favour and indulgence; inquire into their circumstances; and endeavour, by wholesome regulations and wise administration, to engage them, with hearty good will, to labour towards the increase of agriculture; so that no lands may be neglected that are capable of cultivation.

"From the commencement of the year they shall, as far as they are able, acquire information of the circumstances of every husbandman, whether they are employed in culti-

vation, or have neglected it: then, those who have the ability, they shall excite and encourage to cultivate their lands; and if they require indulgence in any particular instances, let it be granted them; but if, upon examination, it shall be found that some who have the ability, and are assisted with water, nevertheless have neglected to cultivate their lands, they shall admonish, and threaten, and use *force and stripes.*"

Yet in this and in another firmaun, also published by Mr. Patton, Aurenzebe speaks very tenderly of the rights of the cultivators as *proprietors*, and is clearly anxious to substitute a milder mode of management for the one actually in use.

The case was much worse with the ryots when the Mogul government was broken up.

Indian Recreations, by the Rev. W. Tennant, vol. iii. pp. 188-90.—"This aspect of the native governments merits the greater notice, because it forms not an accidental or temporary feature in their character, but a permanent state of society. It is a maxim among the native politicians, to regard their 'State as continually at war.' Hence their military chiefs are not permitted for a moment to indulge the habits of civil life; nor do they experience the shelter of a house for many years successively. Their camps are not broken up; nor, except during a march, are their tents ever struck. The intervals of foreign hostility are occupied in the collection of revenue; a measure which in India is generally executed by a military force, and is more fertile in extensive bloodshed and barbarity, as well as in the varied scenes of distress, than an actual campaign against an avowed enemy.

"The *refractory* Zemindars (as they are denominated), upon whom the troops are let loose, betake themselves, on their approach, to a neighbouring mud fort; one of which is erected for protection, in the vicinity of almost every village. There the inhabitants endeavour to secure them-

selves, their cattle, and effects, till they are compelled by force or famine to submit. The garrison is then razed to the foundation, and the village burnt, to expiate a delinquency, too frequently occasioned solely by the iniquitous exactions of government itself.

"In these military executions, some of the peasantry are destroyed; some fall victims to famine thus artificially created, and not a few are sold, with their wives and children, to defray their arrears to the treasury, or to discharge the aggravated burdens imposed by the landholders. Such as survive betake themselves to the woods, till the departure of their oppressors encourages them to revisit their smoking habitations, and to repair their ruins. Thus, harassed by the injustice and barbarity of their rulers, the peasantry lose all sense of right and wrong; from want, they are forced to become robbers in their turn, and to provoke, by their fraud or violence, a repetition of the same enormities against the next annual visitation of the army."

The fixing the poor ryot to the hereditary task of cultivation was evidently, under even the best of such governments, a great gain to the sovereign, and a miserable *privilege* to him.

Buchanan's Edit. Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. iv. App. p. 86.—"Mr. Place, to whom the management of the jaghire, that surrounds the presidency of Madras, was committed, when describing a certain species of tenant, observes, that by granting them the lands 'to them and their heirs for ever, as long as they continued in obedience to the Circar, and paid all just dues, he was enabled to convert the most stubborn soil and thickest jungle into fertile villages.'"

The same sentiments were expressed by Colonel Munro, who had the charge of several districts. He saw clearly that the high assessment on the land checked agriculture and population; and, on this account, he strongly recom-

mended to government a remission of the tribute. His views were admitted to be just; but the public necessities were pleaded as an apology for a tax, the effect of which it appears is to keep back the cultivation of the country.—"It is the high assessment on the land," the members of the board of revenue observe, "which Colonel Monro justly considers the chief check to population. Were it not for the pressure of this heavy rent, population, he thinks, *ought to increase even faster than in America;* because the climate is more favourable, and there are vast tracts of good land unoccupied, which may be ploughed at once, without the labour or expense of clearing away forests, as there is above three millions of acres of this kind in the ceded districts. He is of opinion that a great increase of population, and consequently of land revenue, might be expected in the course of twenty-five years, from the operation of the remission. But a remission to a few Zemindars, he apprehends, would not remedy the evil, nor remove the weight which at present depresses population.

"Under the system proposed, Colonel Munro conceives, that cultivation and population would increase so much that, in the course of twenty-five years, lands formerly cultivated, amounting to star pagodas 555,962, would be relieved and occupied, together with a considerable portion of waste, never before cultivated. The extension of cultivation, however, would not make the farms larger, and thereby facilitate collection. The enlargement of farms or estates is at present prevented by the want of property; hereafter it would be prevented by its division.

"This is the outline of Colonel Munro's plan, which is not less applicable to all the districts as yet unsettled than to the ceded districts; and, *if the exigencies of government allowed of such a sacrifice as a remission of the present standard rents, to the extent of* 25 *per cent., or even of* 15 *per cent., we should consider the measure highly advisable,*

and calculated to produce great ulterior advantages. Indeed, it would be absurd to dispute that the less we take from the cultivator of the produce of his labour, the more flourishing will be his condition.

"But, if the exigencies of government do not permit them to make so great a sacrifice; if they cannot at once confer the boon of private property; they must be content to establish a private interest in the soil, as effectually as they can under the farming system. If they cannot afford to give up a share of the landlord's rent, they must be indulgent landlords." *See Report of Select Committee, Appendix.*

For examples of the rate at which population and produce have increased under mild government, I must refer the reader to accounts of Colonel Read's administration of the Mysore, Sir Thomas Munro's of the ceded districts, and to Sir John Malcolm's picture of the rapid revival of Central India, after the destruction of the Mahratta sway. I find that extracts would swell this Appendix too much.

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